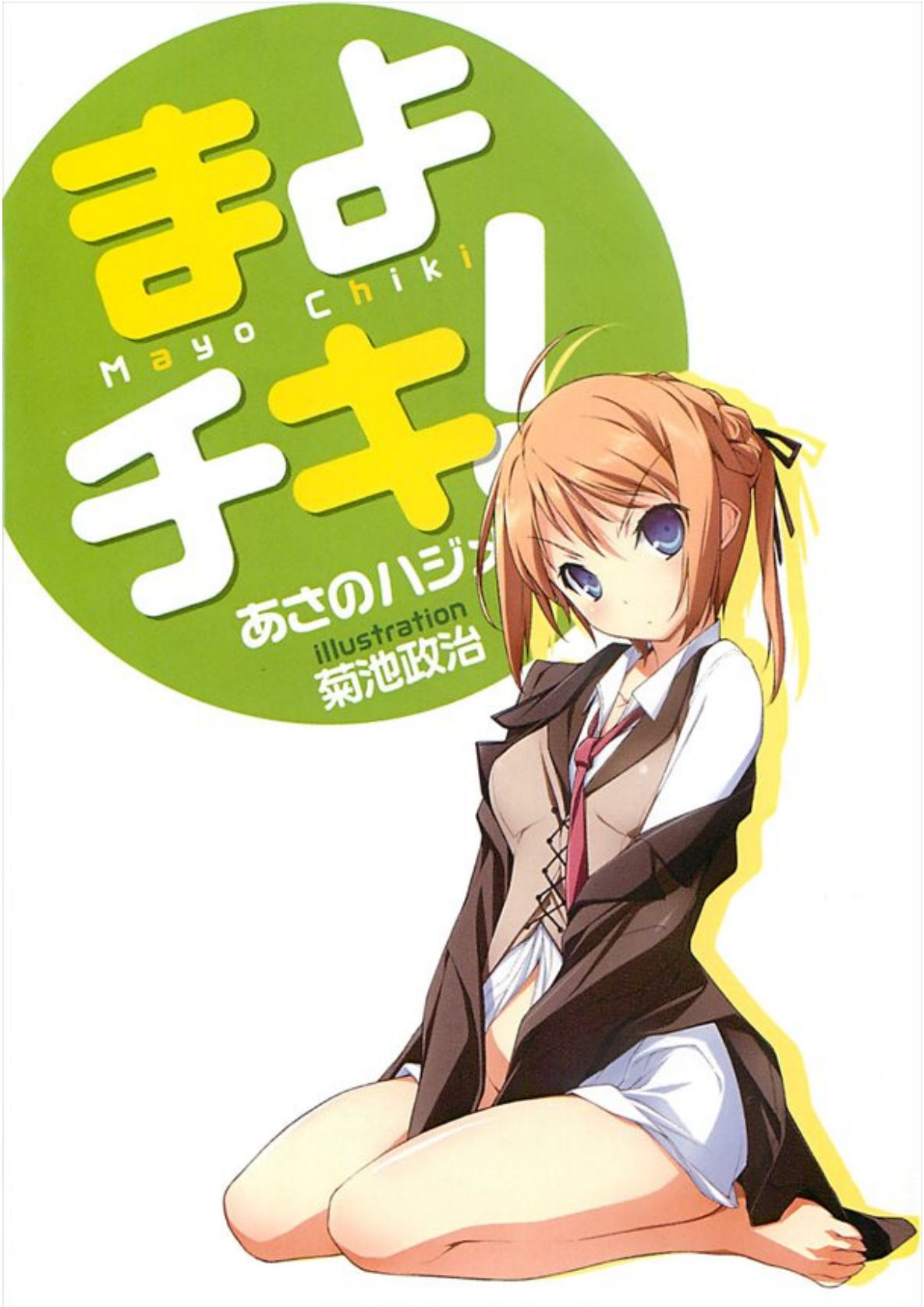
まよチキ!

Mayo Chiki

あさのハジ

illustration
菊池政治



Mayo Chiki!

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AFTER WAITING FOR A FEW MINUTES, I FINALLY UNDERSTOOD THE MEANING OF THOSE WORDS.
KONOE LEFT THE GAME CENTER CLOTHED IN A ROURAN ACADEMY GIRL'S UNIFORM.
"...!"

IN FRONT OF MY EYES WAS SUZUTSUKI IN A SWIMSUIT. A BIKINI. I COULD SAY THAT IT WAS JUST LIKE I HAD IMAGINED, BUT THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER WAS TOO HIGH. A DISTINGUISHED STYLE. THERE'S VOLUME IN THE RIGHT PLACES, BUT HER SLENDER WAIST AND THIGHS IMPRESSED ME EVEN MORE. WHAT DID SHE EAT TO BECOME LIKE THIS?
よキ!まぎ

Kanade Suzutsuki
涼月奏
"I LIKE IT. BEING PARTNER IN CRIME LIKE THIS... QUITE INTERESTING. I FEEL I WON'T BE BORED."
Kureha Sakamachi
坂町紅羽
LITTLE SISTER OF KINJIROU. LIKES TO TRAIN MARTIAL ARTS ON HER BROTHER.
"GIVE BACK MY BIG BROTHER--!"
Kinjiro Sakamachi
坂町近次郎
PROTAGONIST. IS SUFFERING FOR SOME REASONS.
"ARE YOU... A GIRL?"
Subaru Konoe
近衛スバル
A BEAUTIFUL GIRL DRESSED AS A BOY. SERVING KANADE AS HER BUTLER.
"I HAVE TO STAY AS KANADE OJOU-SAMA'S BUTLER NO MATTER WHAT...!"

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Chapter 1: The Secret of Butler-kun

Part 1

Konoe Subaru.

In all probability, there was nobody at Rouran Private Academy who had never heard this name.

Skilled at both academics and athletics. Attractive and good looking. A prodigy of great talents.

If he were a girl, then all of the guys in the school would be knocked out— Such rumors were echoed as if that was the truth about this pretty boy. He was the student that had perfect results anyone would envy.

The expression “flower on a high peak” may exist, but all that meant was that Konoe was the one rose blooming on the peak of Mount Everest.

Anyway, the nickname he had been given was [Subaru-sama][1].

He was the sort of guy that female students admired and male students looked at with jealousy. I couldn’t believe that he was the same as me, a commoner. However, don’t be surprised.

---

[1] ”Sama” is an honorific used for someone who is of a much higher perceived status than the speaker.

The most incredible thing about him was his job.

‘Butler.’

Yes, he was a butler.

Konoe Subaru’s occupation was without a doubt–a butler.

…….

No, no.

When I first heard that, I doubted my ears, you know?

Butler… what do you mean by that? Don’t joke with me. Why does an occupation like that still exist in this modern society? And he’s also attending high school normally.

Shouldn’t he be quickly designated as a special protected species or something?

That was sort of my reaction when I first heard about Konoe. At first, everyone was like that.

There was simply no way they could believe that an endangered species like a butler still existed.

But nevertheless, that scene happened.

When I saw him calling our classmate Suzutsuki Kanade "[Ojou-sama]"[2] and attending to her reverently, I couldn't help but believe in this dream-like story.

Shit.

I'm jealous.

I'm so jealous.

Not only was he popular with the girls, but he was also the butler of that Suzutsuki Kanade?

It made me look at him with envious eyes.

After all, unlike him, I'm leading a dull school life where this brilliant event will never happen to me.

---

[2] "Ojou" is a term used to mean "daughter of a high-class family".

It’s not like I hate women and it’s also not like I play for the other team.

However, the most annoying thing was that, thanks to my body, I was always bad at approaching females.

Indeed, there was no way I could see Konoe Subaru as anything other than a brilliant person.

Even in the remaining time of my school life, I wouldn’t have many chances to get involved with him, huh.

Even when I got to the second year and became classmates with Konoe, I didn’t doubt that.

Until I opened that door.

Part 2

“Huh—“

I was careless.

It was after school, one week after the entrance ceremony.

I opened the door of the bathroom stall without knocking, but there was already someone inside.

There was a small, finely made, delicate doll-like body. With an extravagant uniform that was different from the ones of the ordinary students. The person’s hair was tied back in a braid- a clean cut like the ones on an antique doll.

The vision of that art work was familiar, but unpleasant.

“……Konoe Subaru?”

And instantly, I called out that name.

This is bad.

What’s with this situation?

He probably forgot to lock the door. Konoe rinsed his mouth and widened his eyes while looking at me who had suddenly opened the door.

Aaah, but it was good that I didn't scream. Even if this was after school, there may still be people lurking in the corridors. If you were seen by other people in this situation, no matter how much you tried to explain or apologize, it wouldn't matter.

Furthermore, the person who was there was 'that' Subaru-sama.

It was rumored that within Rouran Academy, there were some fan clubs for him, and at the very center of them were some militants who angrily proclaimed that anyone who raised a hand at Subaru-sama –it didn't matter who it was– would be submerged into Tokyo Bay.

If this scene was seen as one of those, it would be a death sentence for me immediately. There's no doubt that it would be like in the medieval ages, when they burned witches.

If you think about it, the situation is still okay. I just have to apologize. 'Hahaha, sorry about that. I carelessly opened the door. I didn't have any bad intentions'…. like this, I would lightly say that and make my way out.

Okay, here we go.

Breaking the silence, I moved the hands of the clock that had stopped.

“Ah, haha, I’m really sorry. I just carelessly opened the door…”

Because of my high tension, it didn’t go well. When I awkwardly looked closer, my line of sight slid towards his bare thighs.

Err—even being a man, he had a good tone of skin. A porcelain-like white skin. He may have been just about to lower his underwear. And what’s more, my eyes became glued to that white modeled beauty.

—and.

“….unn?”

That moment, I thought I saw something that I couldn’t have.

…….

Wait a moment.

Isn’t he wearing some strange underwear?

How can I say this……. the form was strangely conclusive.

It looks like a pair of girl's panties.

"＿＿＿＿"

I thought that and…

I awkwardly closed the door.

Fortunately, Konoe didn't express a reaction either. I guess he was still astonished. Yeah, I know how you feel. The scene I had just witnessed was a shock to me as well.

Right after leaving the boy's stall, I washed my hands at a nearby sink. Since I didn't use it, there was no need to wash them, but I couldn't spare even one milligram of my mind to think about this.

A cat.

There was a cute cat stamped on it.

A lovely cat was slightly imprinted on that underwear. Or rather, the point was, no matter how you looked……

But…

“No, calm down.”

There’s no way.

I took off my glasses and wiped my eyes. If what happened just now wasn’t an illusion, then the prescription of my glasses got weird. But could the prescription of glasses turn strange all of a sudden?

In the first place, why did I come to the bathroom?

Yeah, it’s all because of the kimchi[1] I ate for breakfast. Damn Kureha, carelessly letting the food surpass its expiration date. The morning show on TV said something about my lucky color being red today or something, but there’s no way I could believe something like that…. huh, it doesn’t matter now.

Question.

Yes—the question is…

[1] Kimchi is a traditional Korean dish made from spicy fermented cabbage.

“Why—was Konoe wearing female underwear?”

I couldn’t believe the words that came out of my mouth.

Because we’re talking about that Konoe.

That Konoe, you know?

Certainly, he was a guy, but he looks like a girl—or rather, he had a face which was much cuter than those of many of the girls here, but he didn’t have any reason to put on that underwear. But still. Could it be that a blood curse ran through his family, in which you had no choice but to wear a girl’s panties?

“….Impossible. There’s no way.”

Then, what was that?

My brain was spinning like a washing machine in the drying process.

Subaru-sama, toilet, panties, cat, nyaa~, nyaa~, nyaa~……

Thinking about it. Some keywords appeared in my head—Suddenly, a revelation fell down into my brain by God’s will.

“……!”

Without thinking, *pon* I hit my hand.

….Aaah, got it.

If you stop and think about it, it’s a simple thing. Ahaha, how idiotic I am. Why didn’t I think of that earlier? There was only one answer. It’s a very simple answer, isn’t it?

—A pervert.

Yeah, Konoe Subaru is a pervert who has a cross-dressing hobby.

“……”

No, wait, Sakamachi Kinjirou. Think about it one more time. Because this is Subaru-sama. He’s completely different from a normal guy.

“But still…”

Certainly, I can’t see it any other way.

Surely, the reason Konoe wore a girl's underwear is that he wanted to playfully feel sexual pleasure. If that wasn't it, then why else would he wear those panties?

"…..What an event. I can't believe that Subaru-sama is a pervert."

My head went blank and white due to the surprising truth.

No matter what I do, if this truth isn't kept under wraps, I will be in danger. If, due to any reason this information leaks out, a lot of female students will lose their hopes and go crazy, and in the worst case, our homeroom teacher, feeling responsible, will cut his head off.

And what's more, I don't have any intentions of mocking other people's hobbies. I respect their privacy. Everyone has secrets. Yeah…. I'm not an exception either.

I twisted the faucet, and the water stopped.

I'm going home.

Because of the great surprise, my bellyache that had caused by the rotten kimchi went flying away.

Today I'll quietly go home, have dinner, take a bath and go to sleep…… I'll forget the things I need to forget.

This is what I decided by myself, but when I tried to turn towards the corridor—

"—You saw it, didn't you?"

For a boy, his voice was a slightly high-pitched alto.

The setting sun was dyeing that empty corridor.

There was a petite figure standing inside of that brilliant orange.

"Jirou….Sakamachi Kinjirou. Hmm, I'm certain that this is your name."

Like the ring of a bell, the clear voice of that doll—Konoe Subaru called my name.

With an angry expression and a surly attitude.

That was the usual Konoe.

At least, this is how we normal classmates know him. Konoe is cold with everyone except his master Suzutsuki. It seems like he's trying to pull away from everyone besides his master, and so his voice and gaze were quite intimidating. Looking at this figure, the girls of my class started muttering something about [cool and wonderful]. Right now I couldn't say that, not with this expression.

…..I'll get killed.

If I stay like this, I'll really get killed.

I don't know why, but a mysterious feeling of uneasiness filled my head.

"If you pretend to stay silent, I'll ask you one more time."

Silence was the reason of the annoyance? Konoe moved his small, petal-like lips.

"You—saw my panties, didn't you?"

Dossha, I felt as if my heart had been thrown into the cold waters of the rowdy Japanese seas.

What is this….. it's just too scary. The things he's saying are just too scary. Ugh, and what about my lucky color being red? Almost everything that fortune-teller said was wrong…..

"Hu…huh? What are you talking about? I….I, I haven't seen anything."

I answered, acting like an idiot. I mean, 'Yeah, I clearly saw everything, I didn't expect you to wear such cute underwear'. Should I have said that? It's impossible. It's almost like trying to do a break dance in a minefield.

“Huh. You saw it so clearly, and now you’re trying to say that you haven’t seen anything?”

A hostile tone as always.

Very good. Since it has come to this, I’ll cut through it. You won’t seal my mouth by using torture methods of the same level as East German ones. I’ll show you my rebellious spirit……..!

“Be honest, you saw it, right? Your eyes clearly saw it, right? You wanted to see my underwear and opened that door, right?”

“There’s no way! Who would want to see your underwear!? I’m already an adult, after all! That animal stamp underwear didn’t get me excited at all!”

“……My bad, for using animal stamp underwear. By the way, how did you know the pattern of my underwear? Didn’t you say that you didn’t see it?”

“……..”

Shit! That was a misleading question!

“Ca—calm down! It was just a sudden impulse!”

“Damn pervert. You no longer have human rights.”

“Don’t joke! I didn’t peek at your panties because I wanted to!”

“Huh. Then, you are saying that what happened just now was an accident?”

“Of course! I only stared without thinking because you were wearing cute underwear.”

“It’s enough. I understand. I understand what kind of human you are.”

Konoe cruelly stared this way. Gulp, what kind of look is that? Her cold eyes were like the ones with which one uses to look at a worthless sexual offender. Damn, what did I do to him?

“Damn! Until now, you’ve just said whatever you wanted. If I’m a pervert, then you are a truly worthless pervert! You’re the one wearing girl’s panti—”

And.

After saying that, I became silent.

More accurately, I was silenced.

Without any warning, Konoe’s right fist flew in my direction, stealing the words from my mouth.

“Guaah—!?”

A piercing body blow. The blow accurately hit a vital point, making my body twist like the symbol ‘ku’[2] from the shock.

This is bad—!

It will come out.

Because of this, all I’ve eaten today will come out. Right I went up a grade, I was going to be releasing wet and warm vomit in the corridor. Life must be trying to punish me. I can’t make such a vivid and pathetic debut in the new semester!

At the last moment, I forced back the demons who had crawled up my throat, and I barely managed to fix my breathing.

“… I am surprised. Just now, you should have at least fainted, or at best, at least vomited blood. You did well enduring this blow.”

“……”

Hey, dammit. Don’t hit your classmates so suddenly.

---

2 <

Now that I think about it, I heard that Konoe, being a butler, was learning self-defense to protect his master. Certainly, just now my vital point had been perfectly hit.

But, unfortunately.

If it's this degree of damage, because of family matters, I have been hit ever since I was five years old. I don't know if I have the right to say it, but I have a tough body that can endure these blows.

"It can't be helped. Then, I'll get serious now."

"Ehh?"

"By the way, the hit you received just now had about half of my full power."

"……..Are you the protagonist of some battle manga? By the way, why do I have to be beaten up?"

"Huh. It has already been decided. You discovered my secret. And now that you know, you have to disappear."

"Wha—"

What's with this? I'll die? I have to die just because I saw his panties?

“You don’t have anything to fear. What I am erasing is not your life but your memories. In my household, we have an amnesia surgery technique that has been passed down through the generations.”

“Aaah, what’s up with that… you are scaring me. So, what kind of technique is it?”

“Hitting.”

“Huh—”

“Didn’t you hear me? I’m going to hit you. I’m going to hit you until your memories fly out of your head. This is the butler’s true amnesia surgery technique.”

“I will die. My life will be erased. Or rather, this method has nothing to do with butlers!”

“No need to worry. It will be over soon. When you wake up, you will be in a hospital bed. Then you will start murmuring things like, ‘Where am I? Who am I?’. Come on, everything will go well.”

“It won’t go well! This is crippling! Or rather, I will become crippled! You will reset the sixteen years of my precious memories!”

“Don’t worry, I will go see you two times a month. Empty-handed.”

“Bring something! Is this the concern that you have for the human that you crippled?”

“Muu, it can’t be helped. Then I will bring an ecchi book. What do you want? Mature women?”

“You’re strongly misunderstanding my tastes…..!”

“….What did you say? Don’t tell me it’s more extreme than this? Mu—…… I didn’t know there was such a brave man among my classmates. Okay, I will spread your legend. Now, calm down and sleep, Silver Killer.”

“I got a such shameful nicknameeee—!!”

Rattling

I think I heard the sound of the image I had of Konoe Subaru breaking into pieces.

This is dangerous. Do something. That damn guy has a cute face, but there is something wrong with his head. Aah, what should I do? No matter how many times I say that I will keep quiet about his secret, the Konoe in front of me will probably not believe me. However, I also don’t want to get beaten up.

“Damn, there’s no other way.”

I slowly stretched my spine and got up.

I guessed that the mood had become strange, and then Konoe took a short breath that sounded like “muu”.

“Why? Why are you trying to resist?”

“Aah, unfortunately, I hate pain. That’s why I will do what I can.”

“Huh—Looks like you’re prepared. I don’t hate that, Silver Killer.”

“…Wha—. I beg of you, please stop calling me by that nickname.”

Then, Konoe held up his fists and took a step back from me.

Bring it on.

It felt as if he was saying that to me.

I felt a chill running through my skin.

To answer that highly motivated Butler-kun, I slowly took a step.

And—I slowly stepped back.

“Wha—”

At that moment, I could hear the sound of someone swallowing his breath from the surprise.

But it was too late.

And then, I changed the direction of my body and starting running as fast as I can.

Escaping.

I’m escaping.

I may look like this, but I have some confidence in my legs when used for running.

“You! You’re trying to run away?!”

Konoe’s voice was heard from behind. As expected, he was impatient.

“Sorry! But I hate pain!”

I ran through the school corridors while crying out loudly.

*thump*thump*thump*

I don't think he'll catch up to me, but I will run for as long as I can. For now, I will run to a place that his hands can't reach. After that, I will think calmly.

"I won't let you run away!"

He really followed me. The sound and pressure of footsteps got closer. It felt like I was in a resistance group during the Second World War. I felt a feeling of suspense attack me.

"Fight like a man! If you do, I will show you the mercy of a butler and finish it in one blow."

"What mercy?! Or rather, I don't want to hear about fighting like a man from a guy who looks like a girl."

"Y, you said it! You really said what you shouldn't have! Don't move from there! In precisely two seconds, I will cut you into pieces, Silver Killer!"

"How many times do I have to tell you, don't call me by that nickname!"

I felt an intimidating chill running through my spine. He's fast. *Grrr* I think that I heard a sound similar to a rumble just now.

This is the second floor. I have to find a way to run to the first floor, but using the stairs is bad. He will probably hit me with a jump kick. Then…..!

I passed through the stairs and jumped into the classroom next to them. The smell of chemicals reached my nose. Yeah, this is the science room. It's not like the science room will help with anything, but it's enough for me to hide in.

*Pllaaaakkk*I closed the door and locked it. Okay, now I will just block the door so that it doesn't open and go down through the window. Oh, perfect, the human body model is here (if I'm not mistaken, his name is Johnny). Lucky—, with this, I will seal the do—

Kaboom

The moment I tried to seal the door with the model, a crushing sound echoed throughout the science room.

I had an ominous feeling and turned my eyes towards the direction of the sound, and there was the shape of the door flying away.

Konoe had kicked the door down.

"Uooo?!"

I dodged the flying door. Making a clanging sound, the internal organs of the model crashed against the wall. Uaahh—, the large intestines and the liver are broken. It became a big disaster.

“I’m cornered.”

The butler came into the room, stepping over the broken peach-colored small intestines. How did this situation get so surreal?

Shit, if it has turned out this way, then I don’t have any other options. I was a little reluctant to use violence on a guy with such a cute face, but Konoe is also a man. If he is a man, I don’t have any reasons for holding back.

I grabbed the model by the leg and raised it. Okay, this is a batting center. My target is a home run. I won’t win any prizes, but I will be able to run all I want!

“Haaaa!!!”

I swung the body with my full power. If you looked in from outside, the scene would cause you to doubt my sanity, but for now, I had no other option. The model’s head cut through the air, aiming to hit Konoe.

“Don’t underestimate me!”

Strong blow.

Konoe hit a right, straight over the model's neck.

The head flew like a cannon ball right through the open window.

"Ua, Uaaaahh!!" "Gyaaaa, a heaaad!!" Screams from a boy and a girl could be heard from below. Apparently, it fell right in front of a student couple that was going home. It surely turned into an Avicii-like[3] scene, but that doesn't matter right now.

……What should I do?

There's no longer anything to do.

It's better to reach a resolution now.

I thought about it inside my mind, then took up a posture with my fists. I guarded with both my hands protecting my head. From my experience, this was the style that suited me the most. Yeah, I'm not a complete amateur.

"Looks like you're finally prepared for it."

In response, Konoe also put up a fighting pose.

---

3 The lowest level of hell in Buddhism.

I gave him a piercing gaze.

And then—as if to let out a war declaration, those lips let out a sentence.

“Now I will finish you for real, with my [Butler Knuckle].”

“……”

Wha—, cut it out. What is this [Butler Knuckle]? Just what it says, huh? I thought it was a new type of curve ball.

“I don’t give a shit, but you don’t have any naming sense, huh?”

“Wha….what are you saying?! Isn’t this name cool?! Look, [Butler Knuckle]!!”

“No, it’s terrible. [Butler Knuckle].”

I only told my honest impressions. His face turned red and he groaned ‘uuh’.

……Don’t tell me, he’s embarrassed?

“Kuu… it’s the first time in my life that I have been shamed like this. I won’t forgive you anymore. I will let you see my mortal technique.”

“Mortal technique?”

“Yeah, I call it [End of Earth].”

“That scale is just too big.”

Destroying the Earth… if you do it, you will die too!!

“Seriously, there must be something wrong with your naming sense.”

“Shu—shut up, don’t criticize my naming sense!”

“……Sorry. This time I’m in the wrong. You thought about it with all your might…”

“Wha—what’s with that ‘I already understand’ face! Don’t look at me like I have a pitiful appearance!?”

“Shit… I thought I was doing something cool. Even though I thought about it for a week. Well, then…” Konoe said in a low tone, slightly moving his lips like a little kid.

“……”

This is dangerous.

He looks….very cute.

The gap between his normally astonished look and now was so large that… Guuh. Stop it. Stop it. If I keep thinking about it, I will climb the stairs of being an adult. Certainly, on a different route from normal people. This is the one thing that I must avoid……!

I tried to regain my senses while I steadied my breath.

Now that I think about it, it has been a long time since I've seen a fight like this.

When I think like this, *tumdum* my heart beats hard.

"＿＿＿＿"

The tension permeated the science classroom.

I could clearly hear my breath. The core of my body became cold.

The air strained.

In the middle of it, I'm attempting to make the first move.

I realized it.

The beaker on the shelf next to Konoe.

Maybe because of the fight from before, it lost its balance. And the big glass beaker that was on it could fall at any moment.

It looks like Konoe didn’t realize it. I think his angle didn’t allow him to see it. The beaker started to incline, and as if a string had been cut, it began to free fall.

“Dodge it!”

My body moved reflexively. Konoe became astonished by the sudden loud shout that was raised from my mouth.

Shit, he didn’t realize it yet.

—Exactly.

If it continues this way, the glass beaker will fall on his head.

“Shit!”

I beg you. I hope I can reach it in time.

Praying so, I pushed Konoe down with my full power.

Shock

The sound of glass being shattered was heard.

Behind us were the glass shards of the broken beaker.

That was dangerous. It had only missed us by a hair's breadth.

When the danger had passed, I started feeling relieved, but—

"Uuu…"

I heard a pained voice from below.

Konoe, who was pushed down by me, was groaning. I thought that he was hurt somewhere, but then I gazed down at Konoe……

That moment, my heart froze.

Konoe, who was below me.

A slender body like a doll's. Defined curves. Eyes like jade.

….This is dangerous, what is this cute creature?

A pleasant aroma was gently reaching my nose. Even if he is a guy, he smells so good, and he's so soft. I touched something soft when I moved my hand……

"Huh…?"

Wait a minute.

No matter what, isn't this feeling impossible for a man? *funyu**funyu* I tried to move my finger that was on his left chest.

"……"

This is strange.

This is very, very strange.

Why does he—being a man, have breasts!?

"Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!"

He screamed like a girl.

At the same time, a fist was swung into my face from below.

“Guhaa!!”

Konoe’s uppercut reached my chin. I was blown away while raising a groaning voice. Fortunately or not, my body was blown away from the broken beaker pieces.

“It hurts!!”

While bearing the pain from the hard hit, I touched my beaten chin and a wet feeling was left on my palm.

……Wet?

When I wondered and looked, ‘my hand was dyed red’.

Blood.

To be precise, a nosebleed.

*Drip**drip* Fresh blood was dripping from my nose.

This is strange; I should have been hit on the chin… Then why am I having a bright red nosebleed?

“Wha—Impossible… why?”

Why?

'Even if I didn't touch a girl, why is my nose bleeding?'

"Y, you touched it…"

A trembling voice was heard. When I moved my eyes from my bloody hand, I saw the figure of Konoe hugging his arms around his chest, trembling with his face dyed red. Now that I look, his eyes are wet.

"Do, don't tell me, that Konoe-san…"

My voice was trembling.

This is true. My opponent is Subaru-sama. In the opinions of all the girls, he was the most admired guy. Yet, even so.

"You…… you're a girl?"

Beethoven's concert was playing in my brain. The song was [Fate][4]. The one that kind of goes like 'tchan-dyan-dyan'.

[4] Beethoven's 5th symphony.

Girl.

Konoe Subaru was a girl.

No, why does a cute girl like her come to the academy dressed like a boy?

This is surely a surprise. Now I get it. In two more seconds she will say, ‘Ahaha, baka, baka! To believe in such a joke!’, trying to trick people with strange methods. Haha, I hope it will happen. Please, I beg of you.

“—I will kill you.”

At that moment, I almost screamed.

Chill

An unspeakable chill ran through my spine.

Konoe was standing right in front of me.

In Konoe Subaru’s hands was a bright red fire extinguisher.

“Wha… Fire extinguisheeeeeeeeer!?”

There's no doubt. That is a fire extinguisher; even a child in kindergarten would know that. He probably took the one in the science room. He made a pose with the metallic red object gripped in his hand.

"Wa—wait a minute Konoe-san. If you hit me with that, I have the feeling that my memory won't be the only thing that will be blown away……"

"Aah, I understand. A pervert like you wasn't ever supposed to be in this world……"

"Tha—that was an accident!! That was without a doubt an accident!!"

"An accident, huh. You touched……you say that even when you have touched my breasts and had a nosebleed……!"

"Uuurrr," Konoe wistfully groaned.

"You've got it wrong! It's not because I got excited that I had a nosebleed! This is because my body ha—"

"Excuses are useless. Don't worry, I will hide your corpse inside the wall, and in the future I will be the teacher here. Then I will be able to keep an eye on your body, so that no one will ever find it."

Keh. Holy shit. He is perfectly aiming for a crime. Rather, this is bad. I can't stand up because of the fear. Uaaaaaaaaaaah, move! Please move, I beg of you, body, please move!!

“Then, this is the end. Die while cringing in despair.”

I received a death sentence.

According to the horoscope, my lucky color is red.

Aah, from now on, I won’t watch that program anymore.

The bright red fire extinguisher was reflected in my eyes.

Right at the moment that it hit the side of my head, I thought that.

Part 3

“Gyaaaaaaaaaaa!!!”

Suddenly, my consciousness returned. Turning to the side, *Baku**Baku*, I placed my hands on my chest and felt my heart beating rapidly. I was awoken by my own scream.

“……What a way to wake up.”

That was the worst.

I had had an unbelievable dream. In the dream, Subaru-sama was a girl, and just because I knew that, he wanted to kill me…just by thinking about it, chills ran down my spine. That was a nightmare. It feels like I just watched that ‘walking on the bridge’ scene from the movie [Exorcist].

“……I should get up.”

I muttered while sighing.

I put on my glasses, which were on the pillow-side. What time is now? If I am late to school in the new semester, it will leave a bad impression.

“……Ah, what?”

My vision recovered, and what I saw was a strange scene. First, it wasn't my room. An elongated, fluorescent lamp hung from the ceiling. A big, white bed and shelves full of chemicals were illuminated by it. Everything in this place was different from my room.

Infirmary.

There's no doubt. I can tell because I've come here so many times. This is the academy infirmary. But why am I in the infirmary?

For the time being, I will just get up.

I tried to get up while my brain was still half asleep and moved the partition sheet that was covering the space to my right.

—And.

Suddenly, with a *Shring* like sound, my right hand stopped.

"…Shring?"

A harsh metallic sound. My right hand couldn't move. If you looked closely, there was a silver colored metal.

Handcuff.

I had a handcuff on my wrist.

Surprisingly, that silver colored, inorganic device was connecting my right arm to the bed like lovers.

"……"

Errr…what could this be?

By any chance, am I still dreaming? If this is true, this is a really bad dream. It feels like Freddy Kruger could appear at any moment.

In an attempt to somehow escape, *clatter**clatter* I moved my hand connected to the handcuff.

Shit, it didn't work. It didn't move an inch, as expected. This is probably how a stray dog feels when someone suddenly ties a collar around his neck. As long as it was tied, it would get food- a much better situation than mine right now.

"—Uh?"

A sharp pain suddenly ran through me. A headache, and a strong one at that. Without thinking, I placed my left hand on my head. This is strange…it was as if I had been beaten on the head with something really hard…

"……Un?"

Wait.

If it can move, does that mean that my left hand isn't tied?

To make sure, I tried to move my left hand. Wow, it's true. It's only my right hand which is handcuffed. My left hand could move freely. I tried to figure out the situation, even if only a little, and took off the futon that was covering my left hand.

"……Huh?"

At that moment—I was about to scream for the second time.

A girl.

There was a girl.

A girl with lustrous, black twintails. She was sleeping comfortably, snuggling up next to me.

(Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!)

I desperately suppressed the scream that was at the same level of loudness as an F1 rocket's start-up. I stopped breathing. My poor heart could have stopped beating.

Of course. The girl that was sleeping at my side (wearing clothes, of course… more precisely, a uniform) looked very familiar to me.

Like Konoe, she wore clothing with an appearance different from that of a normal student's uniform. Although it would normally be a violation of the rules, given this girl's backing, you would let it slide.

If among the girls of Rouran Academy, the idol was Konoe Subaru, then among the guys, the idol was this girl. Distinguished good looks and proportions. Cool and beautiful. Graceful expressions. A clear head. Perfect scores in both sports and studies. This was truly the perfect student.

Suzutsuki Kanade.

Yes, this girl was the master of Konoe, whom he calls [Ojou-sama]. She was the only daughter of this school's principal and, as the successor of the [Suzutsuki] name, was really an ojou-sama. This was Suzutsuki Kanade—the girl who was sleeping by my side.

By the way, even though we were in the same class, we have never even had a single conversation. This is a certainty. A mediocre commoner and the most beautiful girl in the school; there was a divide deeper than the Mariana Trench between us.

But then, why?

Why would this person be sleeping by my side?

“U, un….”

A small breath came out of the sleeping girl’s mouth.

This is bad.

Cold sweat was flowing down my back. Without any doubts, by my side now, there was a girl. She was close. It felt like the distance between us was shrinking with every breath. If a girl stays this close to me…

“…Un?……Ah, you woke up, Sakamachi-kun?”

A dignified voice. She awoke, opened her eyes, took a second look at my face, and got out of the bed.

“Are you okay? These handcuffs don’t hurt you, right? I think the size is correct.”

“……Huh?”

……

Wait a minute.

This girl, wasn't she saying some unbelievable things?

"Do not worry, Sakamachi-kun."

To me, who didn't even know the situation, it felt like Suzutsuki stayed as calm as ever.

"The surgery was completed safely."

"……Eh?"

"With this, you have also become one us, the shocker."

"Wha—Whaaaaaaaaaaat!?"

I was stunned. This surgery was a remodeling surgery? And also, what does shocker mean…? What do I do? Suzutsuki Kanade… this girl had an unexpectedly high mental age.

"So, now that you have become a cyborg, you're different from normal humans. Try to scream [Transform!]. This way, your hidden powers will be released."

“Wha, what did you say? O-okay! Un-understood! Here we go! —Transform!”

I was lying on the bed while screaming that out loud.

Silence.

Cold silence dominated the infirmary.

……

Of course, nothing happened. There was no way that I could transform.

Or rather, what was I doing? What an embarrassment, for a high school student to scream [Transform!]……

“Gu, hahaha.”

I could hear a laugh.

Suzutsuki was laughing at something which she didn’t believe would happen. She was holding her stomach, looking as if she would die of suffocation at any time.

“Kuhuhu. Transform. He is a high schooler, and yet, ‘transform’…… Aha, ahahaha. Amazing. I wanted to make a painting of it to show to future generations.”

“……”

Hey, I have some questions. This girl, is she really Suzutsuki Kanade? It was too much of a difference in attitude from when we were in class. Usually, Suzutsuki was more…reserved. I thought that was the true form of an ojou-sama. But the fact that she was truly beautiful won’t change.

“Err, Suzutsuki-san…can I ask a question?”

“Huhu, go ahead, Sakamachi-kun. Or would it be better for me to call you [Jirou] like our classmates do?”

“I don’t mind it either way……”

Jirou is a nickname I’ve had ever since a long time ago. Sakamachi Kinjirou – Jirou for short.

“Thank you, Jirou-kun. You may have a lot that you want to ask, but try to ask calmly.”

Fufu, Suzutsuki was laughing in a refined manner.

……What an occasion.

Now, for a moment, I became fascinated. Kuh, this girl was certainly Suzutsuki Kanade, the prettiest girl in the school. This title was not just for show. I became tense just by talking to her normally.

“Th- then, I will ask. Was it you who bound my hands?”

“Yes. Be careful. If it were to be released, the seal in your right arm would break.”

What’s with this cool story? Am I some battle anime protagonist?

“……Understood. Let’s put a hold on that matter. Next, why were you sleeping by my side?”

“Aah, I can’t? I was only taking a short nap….”

“Only……?”

Ua, I asked it again so calmly. This girl, didn’t she have even a bit of shame? I’m also a healthy high school boy, you know?

“Don’t worry, I don’t have any intentions of being violated by someone who can only use his left hand.”

“What kind of human do you think I am!?”

Who would do that sort of thing? Also, this infirmary had one more bed. Right now, it was hidden by a curtain, but there shouldn’t be anyone in there. If she wanted to sleep, she could sleep there.

“……Err, where’s the academy nurse, Nakamoto-sensei? Where did she go?”

When I took a look at the clock, it was only just past six in the evening. Usually, at this time, Nakamoto-sensei would be here waiting to lock the room if she hadn’t been released from her duties.

“Aah, she succumbed to my power.”

“Power?”

“Yeah. Because of it, she ran out of the infirmary room while crying after being slapped several times across the face.”

“What are you doing to that teacher!?”

That isn’t power; that is violence. This is sad. Nakamoto-sensei was a teacher with a weak mind. Currently, she is probably inside her car, crying and sobbing.

“Don’t worry. When I said that I slapped her, I didn’t mean with my palm.”

“Eh?”

“Yeah. With two wads of money, I slapped her three times on the cheek. Then she ran away from the infirmary while crying.”

“You bought her!? This is what people call corruption!”

“When I told her about Jirou-kun, she said, ‘I don’t give a damn about that guy!’, and gave me the keys to this place.”

“They were sold! My human rights were sold!”

“By the way, the price was 10,000 yen.”

“Wha—that was the price for a single person?”

“What are you saying? Human lives have no price.”

“The one who attached that price was you, and the one who bought it was also you.”

Even if you say a wad, it doesn’t necessarily mean that all the notes were 1,000 yen notes! To think that a healthy teacher would sell one of her students so easily……

“Nakamoto-sensei…I wonder if she’s struggling in various ways. She’s young, after all.”

“That might be true. But you understand, don’t you? Your rights to your life, whether you live or die, are all in my hands…”

Suzutsuki’s lips, which were usually serene, became twisted.

Scary…I instinctively felt fear. It felt like I was in front of a female vampire. I could be bitten if I relaxed even a little bit. *Shake*

“Then, what shall I do? First, I will start with the ear.”

“Ear? What are you planning to do to my ear?”

“Fufu, that was a joke. I’m not at that level of sadism. First will be your castration, of course—”

“Wait! What do you want, Suzutsuki-san? I’ll do anything that I can!!”

*Gachi**Gachi* I screamed with all of my might, and the handcuffs were clanging.

Suzutsuki Kanade.

My image of her had changed. She wasn't just an [ojou-sama]. There's no way that a normal ojou-sama would have this kind of sadistic personality.

"Don't get me wrong. You can't do anything for me."

Suzutsuki clearly affirmed that.

"The reason for my arresting you is because you discovered my butler's secret."

"……"

Aah, as I had expected. When she appeared, I briefly thought that that could have been it. The nightmare from before wasn't my imagination, but was the cold reality. In other words…

"Why…why did Konoe come to school dressed like a guy?"

I asked a direct question. She—who was Konoe Subaru's master, this girl would…she would know everything. Probably.

"If you want to know, it is because of some family matters."

"Family matters?"

“Yeah. That girl’s……the men of that girl’s family have served as butlers to my family for generations. For this reason, that girl became a butler.”

“……Why is it this troublesome? There’s no reason for that girl, Konoe, to do that. You could just let any of her brothers do that.”

“If I could, I would do that.”

Suzutsuki moved her eyebrows a little.

……Wait. Did I say something strange?

“Subaru is an only child. That’s why she became a butler. If she had a brother, there would have been no reason for her to be a butler.”

“Re, really? Then there’s no way.”

I wonder why. I had the feeling that her voice was trembling. It looked like she was trying to evade my question.

“But, my father—the school’s principal, gave some conditions for her to be my butler. And those were, ‘Go to the school as a male for three years, and don’t let anyone know that you are a girl.’ In other words, if she can’t do this, my father won’t let her be a butler of the Suzutsuki household. At least, I think that is what he meant.”

"……Eh? Then……"

"Yeah, that's right. Today, you discovered that Subaru is a girl. Then she felt that because of this, she couldn't be my butler anymore. For this reason, she tried to close your mouth at any cost. My butler has inconvenienced you."

"……"

Now that I think about it, where is Konoe? Don't tell me that because she had her secret discovered, she turned into a 'hikikomori'?

"Hey, where is Konoe?"

"Fufu, are you worried about her? If you want to see her, then you can see her straightaway. That's because—Subaru is in this room."

"…Eh!?"

In this room? Where?

While gazing at me, Suzutsuki walked to the side of the bed and she opened the curtain that was dividing the two beds, and there was…

"Wha—"

At that moment, I lost my words.

On the neighboring bed from where I was arrested.

Without doubts Konoe Subaru was here.

“Ungu—! Ungugug—!”

I heard a voice that didn’t sound normal.

Of course, there was a ring gag. Konoe’s mouth was forcefully packed with a black mouth piece. And it wasn’t only that. She also had a chain entangling her whole body. Probably she also had her hands tied behind her back.

She was completely bound.

Looking at the scene which was unfolding in front of my eyes, I thought that I was lucky to have only my hands bound. Literally, Konoe Subaru was sitting on the bed with her body completely restrained.

“He…hey, what is that…?”

I let out a shaking voice. Right, now I’m convinced that there were reasons for Suzutsuki to sleep on my bed, but…

“Eh? Don’t tell me, that this isn’t going to satisfy you? Fufun, you are also a little sadistic. There’s no helping it. Then I will put this nose hook…”

“Stop it! Why are you doing these things!? Isn’t Konoe your butler?!”

“E—, but I was only doing that for your sake…”

“When did I ask for such a thing?”

“I thought that you would be glad.”

“I am sorry, but I don’t have this kind of weird hobby.”

Whoa, seriously. This is too abnormal. If this doesn’t become a little more soft-core, I can’t follow her.

“Then, is it alright if I remove all of these?”

“Of course.”

“I understand, but don’t regret it.”

“As if I’m going to!”

If you don't, I have the impression that my human side is going to die. But anyway, what a girl, to tie up her own butler. This girl, isn't she a completely different person than when she was in class?

"Cough—! Cough—!"

*Gachi**gachi* The ring gag was released and Konoe started coughing.

"Tha, that was horrible, Ojou-sama. Why did you do such a thing!?"

Aah, it was certain that she was going to protest. She was tied up by her own master. This is a violation of the Labor Standards Act.

But there are no more reasons to worry. Now to just release the chain that was encompassing her body and Konoe will be free…

"Please…please release this chain quickly! If you don't, I can't kill that pervert."

"……"

Strange…I have the feeling that just now, I heard some dangerous phrases…

"Hey, you damn pervert! Just stay trembling there and wait for me! I will kill you! I will really kill you! I will give you a blow to your brain and send it flying to Argentina."

Right when Konoe's mouth was unbound, it started screaming my death sentences.

Whoa! I forgot! That girl is somehow trying to send me into the darkness…!

"There's no need to hurry so much, Subaru. I will release the chains now."

With a sadistic smile, Suzutsuki put her hands on the chains that were binding Konoe.

"Wa- wait a moment! Stop it, Suzutsuki!"

At the same time.

Right when I said those words, Suzutsuki's fingers stopped.

But the face she had now was wearing a mysterious smile.

"Did something happen, Jirou-kun? I was only doing as you told me and releasing Subaru."

That girl, she raised her lips as if she was having fun down to the deepest part of her heart.

“I forgot to tell you, but you are only safe now because I put my own hands into this situation. It was me who saved you when you were about to die in the science room. It was also me who stopped Subaru’s rage. Then, Jirou-kun, now can you understand your own position here?”

“Yes, I understand it now, Suzutsuki-san…”

“Eh? Sorry, but what did you say just now? I couldn’t hear it, so…could I ask for you to repeat that one more time?”

“…Yeah, thank you very much for saving me, Suzutsuki-sama.”

“Fufufu, it’s okay if you understand.”

Like she was satisfied, Suzutsuki pulled her finger away from the chain.

…Just now I realized one thing.

Suzutsuki Kanade.

Without any doubts, she is an “S.”[1] Or rather, a big “S.” What a sadistic hobby. Different from when she was in class, the current Suzutsuki was shining like a black sun. This was the truth of the most beautiful girl in the school. Err…this is strange. Suddenly, my vision blurred.

[1] “S” stands for sadist. Its counterpart, “M”, stands for masochist.

“This can’t be! Please, release these chains, Ojou-sama!”

*Gachi**gachi* Konoe was screaming while shaking the padlock.

“That pervert forcefully touched my breasts! And what’s more, that criminal got excited and had a nosebleed. We have to kill him right away!”

“Hey, I already told you that was an accident! I didn’t want to do anything bad! And you already hit me enough, didn’t you?!”

“Shut up! Even if you say that I hit you, it wasn’t enough! At the very least, it has to be until that fire extinguisher bends!”

“You are clearly trying to become a murderer!”

If I wasn’t me, I would be backstroking on the River Sanzu[2]. Only in such situations am I grateful for my toughness.

“Even if you are wearing clothes like a boy, why are you still using panties? Wear trunks!”

“S, shut up! Boy’s underwear is just disgusting. I can’t use them!”

[2] The Sanzu River, literally the “River of Three Crossings”, is similar to the Greek River Styx. It is part of Japanese Buddhist traditions.

‘Hah, hah’, Konoe was breathing hard.

“Besides, it is your fault…because of you, I am going to get fired from my work as a butler! What are you going to do?”

“Don’t get angry. Nowadays in Japan, it isn’t so strange to see people unemployed. Tomorrow I will go with you to an unemployment office.”

“I don’t want that! Kuh! No matter what, I have to stay as Ojou-sama’s butler…kuh!”

Geh. This is dangerous. She’s about to cry. Or rather, she was already crying. While Konoe held back her sobs, a mass of tears was sliding down her face.

“I will curse you. Be aware that if I get fired, I will appear below your bed!”

“No, that doesn’t mean that you are going to die.”

“For me it is the same. It will feel like I am dying.”

Wah! What I do? With the way she said it, I had to panic! I’ve never had any experience with girls from outside of my family crying in my whole life. I’ve never gone through any situation like this before. It felt like there was an infection by some unknown virus.

“Relax, Subaru, it’s alright.”

She smiled like an angel. Her tone of voice would make anyone who heard it become calm.

“For what reason do you think I tied Jirou-kun? It was for you to not have to stop being a butler, right?”

“……”

Err—, what does that mean?

The remark was too sinister for me to even try to protest—. At that moment.

Suzutsuki jumped on my waist as if she was riding a horse.

“!!!!!”

My breath stopped.

Light.

I wouldn’t say that she was as light as a feather, but Suzutsuki’s body was unexpectedly light.

“…But…that doesn’t matter!”

“I wonder, what doesn’t matter?”

While playing around with her long hair, Suzutsuki looked calm, as if she was taking a coffee break. I, who was reluctant, had my mouth open like a suffocated goldfish. Or rather, I was suffocating.

“Jirou-kun. Does your body have any special conditions?”

Gulp.

“I heard from Subaru. When you had a nosebleed, you said something about your body…”

Hii—. This girl suddenly came to a painful point. My heart started to race. I had the sensation that my mouth was burning.

“Nee, you’re pretending to stay quiet?”

Judge Suzutsuki’s special interrogation court session. The defendant was, of course, me. Now that it came to it, I will have to stay silent. For the time that I am tied up, I will keep my mouth closed and somehow get through this situation.

“This is also fine. Now that you have turned this way—I will directly ask your body!”

“Eeh—?”

When I realized what she said, she, who was riding on my waist, was twisting her mouth in a weird shape. After that, those white fingers started to remove my shirt buttons one by one.

“Hey, hey, why are you removing my clothes!?”

“Stay still. You know, my hands could go crazy and hurt your internal organs.”

“Don’t say this kind of fearful thing so easily!”

“By the way, the grip strength of each of my hands surpasses 80 kilograms.”

“Don’t lie!”

“Fufu, I got found out, but it’s alright. In my household, we have a torture technique that goes back through the generations, it will take out your rib in one bl—”

“Stop it! I understand! I understand, so stop touching me—!”

Even if I put all of my might into a scream, it looked like it wouldn’t reach Suzutsuki.

In the unbuttoned gap of my shirt, that white finger was sliding like a snake on my ribs. Thin fingers. With that cold feeling on my skin, my heart *dokun* jumped.

This was bad—

This feeling like all of the blood in my body was being concentrated on a single point.

My face was hot. The interior of my nose became irritated.

This is the worst…I can't endure it anymore.

Spluurt

The sound of something spraying out.

My vision had gone red.

Nose bleed.

Sure enough, I had a nose bleed from being touched by Suzutsuki Kanade.

“Th—This big perv! How could you?! How could you get excited from Ojou-sama’s touch and have a nose bleed…?!”

I could hear a furious voice coming from the bed to my side.

To my front was Suzutsuki, whose body and face had been dyed red because of my blood.

“Fufu…I see. This is interesting.”

Suzutsuki, while thinking, narrowed her eyes.

“Don’t tell me, that your body has nosebleeds from being touched by girls?”

“Eh?” A question mark appeared above Konoe’s head. Maybe above my head, the two kanjis for despair were hovering there[3].

They discovered it. The secret that nobody besides my family members knew was discovered by the girls of my class…

“Maybe it is an allergy? But this is a condition that I haven’t heard of before.”

“…iiya, this isn’t an allergy. This was unnaturally acquired.”

---

3 Despair is written as 絶望.

“Hey, do you know ‘Sakamachi Akemi’?” I asked statically.

“I know her. She appeared a lot on television some time ago, right? If I’m not wrong she was a—female pro wrestler.”

That’s right. Sakamachi Akemi. The female pro wrestler who had the nickname [Senketsu no Jou][4], and she had won a lot of titles. Her name was known worldwide, which is why she had appeared so many times on TV.

And, what I was trying to hide…

“The fact is, that person is my mother.”

“This is the first time that I’ve heard of this.”

Unexpectedly, Suzutsuki was surprised.

“But how is that related to your condition?”

Konoe was staring with wondering eyes.

4 The Queen of Fresh Blood.

At first glance, it didn't seem to be related, but it was greatly related. This was tied more tightly than the gandanium alloy.

"Err, how do I put it…? I get beaten."

"Ha?"

Suzutsuki and Konoe opened their mouths together in response to my words.

"In my household, my mom loves to talk about fights, and it's not just that, my sister who is one year younger than me also loves that. Since I am also a kid, living with that battle maniac family, I grew up while getting beaten every day…"

Ah, just remembering that made me feel bad.

Sandbag.

If I had to say it in one word, my position inside my own family was that of a sandbag.

Brain buster, STO, Frankenstein, Texas clover hold…etc, etc, etc. The number of times this body had been hit by their techniques was vaster than the number of stars you could count in the night sky.

“[This is to train you!] or [Love Whip!] or [I love you, Onii-chan!]… I have lived through 10 years of being beaten by my mother and my little sister while hearing that… The result was this embarrassing condition…”

Gynophobia.

If I were to explain, those words would be the fastest way. The influence of this twisted family relationship was that I became too weak to the touch of women. But also thanks to that, my body became very strong.

“But why do you have nosebleeds?”

“I don’t know it very well myself, but it could be called a habit, and, I thought that maybe if I had a nosebleed, they would stop beating me. But it eventually resulted in the worst outcome of me bleeding from simply being touched by a girl…”

“…But, this is family kindness. They wouldn’t keep beating you if you were bleeding, right?”

“…No, that’s wrong. I once heard them talking about the room becoming dirty.”

“……”

Konoe became speechless. She looked at me with eyes like she was looking at a soaked dog in the rain. It looks like she is thinking pitiful things about me. This could mean that she is a better person than I had originally believed.

“I see, so this is what’s going on.”

While sitting on my hips, Suzutsuki opened her mouth.

“You’re a chicken who can’t help but to fear a girl’s touch.”

Gusa I felt like a knife had pierced straight into my heart.

Uwaaa, why is this girl saying that so straightforwardly? That’s too much of a fast ball. If you don’t throw a breaking ball, my heart won’t be able to take it with its wooden bat.

“Nee, isn’t that right? Sakamachi Kinjirou-kun?”

“!?”

Now you’re calling me by my full name? Do—don’t tell me, this girl…noticed? The secret of my name that no one had noticed up until now…!

“What’s up with you? Say something. Sakamachi Kinjirou-kun.”

"……"

"Saka-machi Kin-jirou-kun."

"……"

"Sakama, Chicken, Jirou-kun."

"……"

"Chicken-kun?"

"Uwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

Not being able to handle it, I screamed out loud.

"What's happening, Chicken-kun? There's sports drink coming out of your eyes."

"Stop! Don't call me by that name!"

…I'm cursed. It can't be anything besides that. They say that the name determines the body, and that is indeed true. Chicken… I can't believe that such an annoying word was incorporated into my own name…

“This is a good name, isn’t it? There’s nothing to be so ashamed of.”

“How did you come to that conclusion from our talk?”

“That’s right. In the future, you should marry a person named [Okamachi]. If you do that, it will be more fun.”

“Ha?”

Okamachi Kinjirou.

Oka-machi Kin-jirou.

Okama[5], Chicken, Jirou.

“Ne? That’s fun, right?”

“That’s not fun! How can you think about such things so easily!?”

Was this girl a demon?

[5] Okama [オカマ] means transvestite.

Devil Suzutsuki.

From now on, I will call her by this name in my mind. This was the only form of resistance I could put up against her dominance.

"That's not very good."

"Wha—!? You can read my heart?"

"If you are going to call me by another name, then call me [The Slaughter Angel Kanade-sama]."

"Heinous! This is becoming even more heinous than before!"

"Or even [Lyrical ☆Kana-chan]."

"A hundred and eighty degrees of difference! This definitely doesn't fit you!"

"Then [Slaughter Angel ☆Kana-chan]."

"Don't mix them!"

Conclusion.

Suzutsuki certainly was Suzutsuki. She managed to drain all of my energy.

“By the way, Jirou-kun.”

Suddenly, Suzutsuki’s mood changed.

“Do you want to cure your phobia?”

“Yes. If I can, I want to cure it.”

Try having a body that has a nosebleed every time you’re carelessly touched by a girl. You would be misunderstood, like what happened before with Konoe. It would be a solitary life resulting in low birth rates and longevity[6]. What I really wanted… was to cure this phobia right away. I wanted to be cured and start touching girls.

“Then, should we help you?”

My ears couldn’t believe those words.

---

[6] This refers to Japan’s growing population of elderly people due to a declining national birth rate.

“I think that your phobia is only a sense of fear imprinted onto your body against girls. Then, as a reflex, your body reacts with a nose bleed, like a Pavlovian dog[7]. But if we wipe out this sense of fear, you won’t have nosebleeds anymore, right?”

“That is…”

What’s that? I had the feeling that what Suzutsuki was saying was correct. But, how would I wipe out the sense of fear?

“I’m telling you that we are going to help.”

With a resolute attitude, Suzutsuki proclaimed.

“We will help you with the curing of your phobia. I think that the only requirement is to make you unafraid of girls. Along with Subaru, I will lend you the necessary assistance. In return…”

“In return…?”

“I want you to not tell anyone that Subaru is a girl.”

---

7 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Pavlov did his research on “conditioned reflexes” using his dogs.

She even went so far as to add on, “Even if you have to die.”

I know what you want to say. In other words, an exchange of conditions. In exchange for me protecting Konoe’s secret until the end, even if it meant my death, they would help me heal my gynophobia.

“My father hasn’t heard yet that you discovered Subaru’s secret. If you protect Subaru’s secret, he would never realize that we’ve broken the conditions.”

“This is clearly fraud.”

“It’s okay if he doesn’t find out. So, will you make a deal with me?”

“Instead of making a deal, it’s more like we would become partners in crime.”

“Wonderful. I like it. Being partners in crime like this— quite interesting. I feel that I won’t be bored.”

“…By the way, what would happen if I broke the conditions?”

"Then I would have no other options but to take tough measures like Subaru did. In a month from now, an unidentified body would be found in the Fuji forest area."[8]

Uwah, this girl could say fearful things in such a straightforward manner. What about the partnership? This is clearly blackmail. But…it doesn't matter if it's a complicity or blackmail—currently, I have no other options.

"I understand. I will follow your orders, Suzutsuki. But…is Konoe okay with that?"

I took a glance at Konoe who was off to the side. If it's this girl who had called me a pervert, then she wouldn't want to make a deal with me.

Though surprisingly, Konoe thought for a second with her head down, then said,

"I am Kanade Ojou-sama's butler. I will follow her orders. Also…"

"Also…?"

"No…it's nothing."

---

8 Also known as the Sea of Trees, which has a very popular name that you may have heard of before. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aokigahara

For some reason, I couldn't imagine what Konoe was going to say.

"Fufu. Then, it's decided."

Suzutsuki was laughing very happily. Maybe she saw something fun?

"By the way, Jirou-kun, is the only symptom of your gynophobia having a nosebleed? What happens if you are continually touched by a girl, even while you're having a nosebleed?"

"Eh? Well…I probably will not be able to endure it and will faint due to blood loss."

Really, how many times have I fainted while being beaten by my mother and my little sister? I don't know what they did after that, but I woke up safely, thus I think that they didn't do any bad things to me.

"But how is that relat—"

And.

I said all that and became speechless.

Rather, I was silenced.

Suzutsuki's fingers were spread out on my ribs.

"Err, excuse me, Suzutsuki-san?"

"Don't worry, Jirou-kun. This is an experiment. For future reference, I have to know how long your body can endure."

The devil Suzutsuki was smiling in the shape of a crescent moon.

This was dangerous. This girl, is was clearly enjoying this.

"Stop that! There's no need for you to do such a thing, hyan!"

"Ufufu. Although I only touched you a little, you gave me such a cute voice."

That thin and long finger slid up and down my skin multiple times.

I can't stand it. Looking from the outside, it would seem like a heavenly situation, but for me who had gynophobia, it was close to torture. My vision was about to fade. This way my sould will come out and make a trip to the other world.

"Please, save me, Konoe. If this continues, I will really faint."

With a blurred voice, I sent an SOS with all of my might to the bed to my side.

“I am a butler, not a magician. That’s why I can’t leave this chain.”

Saying that, Subaru-sama silently closed her eyes.

“Hey! Don’t pretend to be asleep! I beg of you, don’t overlook this- hyaaaa!”

“Ara, Jirou-kun, you have a birth mark on this place. Cute. And this body trained by your family is very tight. If it’s like this, then even after you faint, I can have fun.”

Fufu Suzutsuki’s laughing voice was resounding loudly.

Aaah, from today onwards, will this be my normal daily life?

My consciousness was gradually fading away.

In the middle of this, I prayed to God for the safety of my chastity.

Chapter 2 – The Love Romance Suddenly…

Part 1

It doesn't matter how much darker the night gets, the dawn will still come. It doesn't matter how much you don't want tomorrow to come, the morning will still come.

That's why I was looking at the clock in my room. The time is currently seven o'clock. If I don't wake up soon, I will be late for school.

From outside the window came the sound of the rain. Until last night, it didn't look like it would rain, but this morning the weather seemed as melancholic as my heart.

By the way, the manner in which I wake up is usually worse, coming close to asphyxiation. It looks like I have the unconscious habit of pressing my face into the floor while waking up. Since entering this year, I should have died and broken down into five pieces already. Maybe one day, I will be killed while waking up.

Right, I can say that I have never been late to a class. It's an almost disgusting never-been-late attendance. I don't want to be proud, but it could win a perfect attendance award.

Why?

It’s easy.

In my house, there is one more strong alarm clock.

“Nii-saaaaaaaaaan— Morniiiiiiiing!!!”

Together with a firecracker-like voice, *Dogaaan* the door of my room was flung open.

Standing there wearing a Rouran Academy uniform was a first year middle school girl with short hair. Her face was a little cute, but still childish, especially her eyes. Her two pupils were shining innocently. Without a hint of sadness, she had a brilliant expression on her face and a cheerful attitude. Her strong points were sports and her lively energy.

Sakamachi Kureha.

Yeah, without a doubt- my little sister.

“Uryaaaa!!”

After that first speech upon opening the door, Kureha jumped, yelling with a high tensioned voice. Her thin body was dancing in the air. As you know, this isn’t an open air space; this is my room.

But there's no way that the jump would continue for long because she was falling at an acute angle. Naturally, the angle and the elevation were leading to my abdomen—.

"Guabha!"

Diving-elbow-drop. My body was hit by that one blow and incredibly took the form of the letter V.

Normally, an unconscious person would be immediately resuscitated with this blow. Rather, I think normal people would be sent directly to the ICU with this. Getting hit was also unavoidable. I could avoid the attack, but the one time that I had, the bed I had bought at the second-hand shop was broken into the shape of the letter U. That move has the destructive power of a great ballistic missile.

“Good morning, Nii-san!”

Kureha changed to the next technique while smiling, looking as if she was playing. Unfortunately, a little sister who went so far as to take the trouble to jump on me from across the room isn’t kind. At an incredible speed, she grabbed the futon that I was under and decided my body’s movements for me.

“Hey—! Solid Ankle Lock!”

“Guhaaa!”

“Continuing on, STF!”

“Wa— Wait a— gunyaaah!”

“And now for the choke!”

“……uh! ……h! ……h! (My voice won’t come out!)”

“For the final blow! Arm Crush Reverse Ten Symbol!”

“Guhaaaaaaaa!”

“……Aah… Sorry, Nii-san… I broke your elbow…”

“Uwaaaaaaaaaah?!”

“Tehe. That was a joke.”

“……”

“But… Today’s target was your artery…”

“As expected from a triangle chop—uh?”

……

My mornings are always like this.

I am already used to it.

“Once again- morning, Nii-san. How did I do this morning?”

Like always, while wiping the nosebleed off of my face with a tissue, Kureha asked that.

“Aah, I had the shit beaten out of me as always. Thanks to that, I almost got to sleep a second time.”

That’s not a lie. The last one was dangerous. A little more and I would have gone to a flower garden to meet my dad who had died 10 years ago.

“Nyahaha. Yosh, the morning training is over.”

Kureha left the bed with a large smile on her face.

By the way, she is in the handicrafts club. No, seriously. I also thought she was going to enter the karate club or the pro wrestling research group, but she herself decided to join the handicrafts club. The school has everything to polish a woman, but what do they do for the morning training of the handicrafts club?

“Iyaa, but the handicrafts club is full of energy. Every morning we do physical strength training.”

“Physical strength training?”

"Yeah. It's awesome. Buchou-san can break a concrete block with one finger."

What a problem, God. Right after the school admission, my little sister ended up entering a strange group.

"We are going to the mountains for the Golden Week[1] training camp. They said that we are going to stay for three days and two nights for a survival camp. Sounds like too much fun. Right?"

"……Something is seriously wrong with your club activities."

I have never heard about such a handicrafts club. In no time, you could have been brainwashed and become a green beret. By the time you realized it, you could already be fighting in the Middle East.

"I wanted to fight with a bear at least once; that's why I am thankful for it."

"Stop that. Even if it is you, you are going to die."

---

1 Golden week is a holiday week in Japan. It lasts from April 29th to May 5th.

“Eh—, I am serious here. Mom wrote in her last letter that she fought with a tiger in India.”

“Please, don’t try to be like Mom. That person stopped being human a while ago.”

My mother is so strong that she left her enemies crying in the ring, and half a year ago, she left on a journey to strengthen her fighting skills.

Since we receive a letter from her once a month with allowance, I know she is alive, but her current location is still a mystery. But I’m pretty sure that she would be somewhere around Egypt fighting with a mummy.

“Now that I realize it, Nii-san. The regions around your eyes are dark, didn’t you sleep enough?”

You can’t even say that I didn’t sleep enough. I stayed awake the whole night.

“Aah, I am only wondering a little about human relationships.”

“Nya?”

My little sister looked at me with fuzzy eyes, like she had seen a yeti on a snowy mountain.

“What’s that? I’m also in high school. I have problems.”

“Nii-san… Don’t tell me they are bullying you?”

Wrong. In fact, I don’t even know why you quickly answered with that. I felt like what had taken place in the infirmary yesterday had already surpassed bullying by about 100 kilometers. If I could, I would stop going to school.

“Then, it’s about women?”

“Well, you could put like that.”

Indeed, that’s right. But I wanted that to be wrong.

“Umm… I guess Nii-san is already at the age to worry about that.”

“Are you the neighboring Granny? Don’t say that so calmly!”

“Then, when is the wedding?”

“The conversation is going too fast. Is there a jet engine piled inside your head?”

“If it’s possible, I want a little sister.”

“That’s pitiful. I will never lay my hands on girls that are younger than you.”

“But I don’t want to become an aunt at this age.”

“…I beg of you, please believe your brother. Do I look like a person that would do that?”

Kureha became silent, looking at me with a serious face which seemed to indicate that she was in a bad mood.

Can you see it? From the eyes of my little sister, I look like a human without principles.

“But Nii-san, you are always peeking at my baths…”

“Don’t say things that could be misunderstood. I have never peeked at any of my family members’ baths!”

“Eh? But I am always peeking…”

“Okay, okay, I didn’t know about that.”

“But Nii-san, you always start washing from below your armpits.”

“You really were peeking!”

Why did she know that information? This is a top secret issue that I didn’t even talk about with my old goldfish.

“Aah, right, why don’t you take a shower? You are incredibly sleepy.”

“Don’t say that now! It sounds like you want to peek at me taking a bath!”

“Nyahaha. Indeed, that’s right!”

“That was right!?”

“That’s why we will enter together. We always used to do it, right!”

“I won’t do that! Entering the bath with you is a distant memory!”

We had bathed together until the second grade of elementary school. It’s so old an image that I can’t see it anymore.

“Hey, don’t say such harsh things.”

“That wasn’t harsh. In this age, entering the bath with your little sister is close to a crime!”

“Uuh, it’s a big problem, our father in heaven. Nii-san is entering his rebellious phase.”

Kureha was exaggerating, putting her hands together like she was praying to the heavens.

Don’t worry in the heavens, old man, I don’t have such a rebellious phase. If that happens, I would be turned into pieces by your wife and your daughter. Now I am very obedient. I am at the lowest level of the family hierarchy.

“Maa, leaving that aside. I think that you should take a shower and relax. This morning, your sleepy eyes are incredible, and your head looks strange too, Nii-san.”

“What kind of strange?”

“Err… Russian?”

“Don’t say such rude things. It could turn into an international problem, you know.”

“It’s okay. I have already managed to learn command sambo, so I think I can give a good match.”

“The incredible thing is that when you say it, I can’t take it as a joke.”

Command sambo is the name of a martial art that the Russian soldiers adopted. In Japan, it would be something like judo, and lately the number of fighters that use this martial art on the ring is growing.

Certainly, the one who taught this dangerous thing to Kureha was our mother. Lately, not only pro wrestlers but fighters from all places and kinds are using this martial art. A fearful story.

“And if it is command sambo, our coach is well known for that.”

“Coach? From the handicrafts club?”

“Yeah, his name is Sergey-san.”

“……”

No matter how you look at it, he is a genuine Russian. I wonder if it’s okay, the handicrafts club of Rouran Academy. Perhaps in reality he is secretly a spy agent from some kind of intelligence agency. Next time, I will ask Suzutsuki.

“Then, Nii-san. I am leaving for my morning training. I have already prepared breakfast. You have to eat it all, okay?”

“By the way…… this morning’s menu is?”

I asked while trembling with fear.

That couldn’t be helped. In the last week, I haven’t eaten anything besides strange kimchi.

Gratefully, almost all of the house work here is done by Kureha, but it looks like she doesn’t have any sense for food. The number of overwhelmingly strange menus created by her is large.

“It’s okay. Today is different from usual.”

“Seriously!? Aaah, I feel relieved. There’s no way we could eat more than a week of the same thing for breakfast.”

“Yeah, I also thought that way, so I made today’s kimchi a nationalized kimchi.”

“Yay—, great, I’m so touched that I could cry—.”

Calm down. I can't let this little thing revolt me. Even if I did that, I can't win, and it is still better than the time Mom was together with us. Now that I think back, at that time, the dinner table was lined with nutritional supplements; that was an awkward scene.

"Then, I'm going, Nii-san. Let's meet at school again."

Kureha noisily left my room while shaking her skirt uniform. High energy as always. Way different from me. Are we really connected by blood?

Then, shall I take a shower?

I took my towel and went straight to the shower room. It's not like I am following the orders of my little sister, but from here on I should change my attitude and tighten my feelings.

Whatever, from today onwards, it's starting: my healing program.

"Fighting spirit… I have to wear it."

I murmured it to myself.

Yesterday in the infirmary, I somehow managed to run away, but there are no more places for me to rest my heart at in the school. My last oasis will be my house, so I have to enjoy myself to the fullest.

I followed the way to the shower room, reaching the dressing room.

For the time being, I will take a bath and relax.

I thought that and opened the door.

In the dressing room was a beauty that I didn't know.

She was completely naked.

"Whaaaaaaaat?"

It was so sudden that I raised a strange high-pitched voice.

What is with this situation? Is this paradise? Did Kureha's elbow finally send me to the heavens!? Shit, it's a shame that I'm not wearing my glasses! Thanks to that, my vision is blurred……!

"……"

Iya, cool down, cool down. Calm down a little. Get back to yourself. This is not the time to think about imprudent things.

Her wet skin and hair. Looks like she was taking a shower, as she was wiping her wet hair with a bath towel. The unripe body of a young girl. It was still a little childish, but this was the verge of the emergence of the butterfly, when the beauty is still hidden. This was the feeling being given off.

“Ha, hey—.”

Why am I so calmly depicting her naked body in front of my eyes?

While petrified and astonished in front of my eyes, the girl used the bath towel that she was using to wipe her hair to wrap her body. At that moment, her pupils looked straight at me.

“Close.”

“Ha?”

“Close your eyes!”

Like she said, I closed my eyes right away. For some reason, I felt an absolutely strong power telling me that it would be bad if I didn’t do that.

And.

I felt a chill above both of my eyelids.

What is it? A finger? But what would a finger be doing—.

“Guaha—!”

A queer voice came out of my throat. The thing that was above my eyelids pressured my eyes with a tremendous strength.

“Gyaaaaaaa! My eyes! My eyes!”

While screaming in the usual tone, I rolled around the floor of the dressing room.

Iya, wait. I remember the feeling of this ruthless violence.

My body— My body remembers this feeling. What a merciless behavior. The only one who could do something so cruel so calmly is……!

“Humph. You should be grateful for the fact that you haven’t become blind.”

An alto voice resounded. I have unpleasant memories of this terrible, blunt feeling.

“Konoe! What are you doing in my house!?”

I screamed while pressing down on both of my hurt eyes with my hands. The person who was in the dressing room of my house this time was, without a doubt, Konoe Subaru.

“I came here a little while ago, and a girl who claimed to be your little sister came and told me to ‘Please enter and take a shower’. That’s what happened.”

“Why, why would such a thi—”

“I’m pretty sure that she was worried about me catching a cold. I got very wet from the rain while coming here, and my body was soaked. I took advantage of her courtesy.”

“……..”

Iya, this is absolutely wrong. Shit… Damn Kureha, she planned this through.

This is probably a foolish prank by Kureha. When I would go to take a shower, I would encounter my male classmate. It’s the type of useless surprise that she would come up with. Usually, I would laugh and leave it alone without any harm being done, but Konoe wasn’t a man.

“Why did you come to my house so early in the morning!?”

“Ojou-sama’s orders. For the sake of not letting you spread my secret, I was ordered to keep an eye on you. So I came to your house to go to school together and keep an eye on you.”

That devil Suzutsuki. I don’t think she planned that together with Kureha, but I’m certain that she thought that sending Konoe to my house would make a fun (for her) event happen. I felt like I could hear her loud laughter. Her plan was a great success.

“Leaving that aside… You saw me naked, didn’t you?”

Guh.

“Did you know? My household has an amnesia inducing technique passed down through the generations.”

I definitely know that. Yesterday, I got hit a lot by that. Because of that, my head still hurts.

“You have earned the right to be hit by that technique!”

“No, I will pass this time. You should give this right to the people who helped you through the year.”

I think that this could be sold at a net auction. This kind of enthusiastic idea sells for a lot on the internet, doesn’t it? A premier tag should fit well.

On the other side of the darkness of my eyelids. A mysterious, intimidating feeling was rising.

Killing intent.

When I felt the same cold feeling from yesterday running through my skin, I finally understood.

In this world, there are no more places for me to rest calmly.

“…that was my first time.”

Unexpectedly, I had the feeling that I heard an annoyed voice.

“Eh?” by the time I tried to ask the meaning of those words, my consciousness was blown into the darkness.

♀♂

Part 2

“Hey there, Jirou. What’s that? Why do you have such a depressed face at the start of the morning?”

When I entered the classroom and moved towards my seat, my classmate Kurose called out to me.

“Shut up, Kurose. What kind of face do I have to make for you to say that it’s a ‘happy face’? Did it not occur to you that it may be ‘out of stock’, huh?”

“Iya~n, Jirou-kun is so cranky today~.”

There was a well-built boy standing there, laughing in a disgustingly retarded manner.

Kurose Yamato. Since the first year of middle school, he has been in the same class as me, an undesirable but inseparable relationship. He was tall and had broad shoulders. Even though he went to the National Judo Tournament, he joined the light music club as a drummer when he began high school. That was a big change.

“Did something bad happen? Don’t tell me that you are being bullied by your little sister again?”

"…Something like that."

I was feeling a throbbing pain in my head. Shit, that damn violent butler. No matter what, she hit me too much. My body was not for use in whack-a-mole.

"Ahem. My condolences. By the way, Jirou."

Kurose came closer like he was going to whisper something to me.

"This morning, did you really come to school together with Subaru-sama?"

Fuha! I felt like I was blowing up. How did he come to know about that?

"Uwa, this is serious! Why? Why is a commoner like you coming to school together with the school prince? Are you in a special relationship?"

Correct. That guy's instincts are sometimes so spot on that they made me fear them. From what I had heard, he had also predicted the great tsunami of Sumatra. What kind of prophet are you?

"We only happened to meet on the way to school. It's not like he came to meet me at my house."

“That’s right. There’s no way that the honored student would go to meet you.”

With that said, Kurose turned his face to the back of the classroom.

Looking closely, that was the figure of Konoe Subaru-sama. Sitting here, looking at her sour expression, I thought that she usually shone much more.

Muh—, she was still mad due to what had happened that morning. Or maybe the kimchi she ate for breakfast did not suit her tastes. She must have thought, “So this is the meal of common people…” while receiving a shock.

“I don’t know why, but Konoe looks so dark. He doesn’t even relate much with his classmates. It doesn’t matter how good his face and results are, none of the boys will get close to him. The girls at least try to draw close, but he’s cold even towards them.”

“But there’s no other way.”

Konoe was so isolated that even I could tell that in one glance.

For Suzutsuki who was in the same class as us (in her perfect student mode, of course), it looked like a waste of time. When she was not alone with Suzutsuki, she was always staring out the window.

The Lonely Prince.

That was the feeling that Konoe radiated when she was in school.

“By the way, how did you know that I came to school together with Konoe?”

“Huh? Don’t ask such a foolish thing. Don’t you know that nowadays we have the cell phone, the best information tool of all time? The news that Subaru-sama came to school with a person that wasn’t Suzutsuki Kanade passed through the whole school like influenza. The rumors say that the [S4] has already begun to move.”

“S4?”

“Hey, hey, don’t tell me that you haven’t heard about it. [Shooting Star Subaru-Sama]. See, it has 4 ‘S’s. It is the most powerful hidden fan club of Konoe Subaru in Rouran Academy. There is a rumor that at least 60% of the academy girls are in that club.”

“…Then, what did you mean by ‘they have already begun to move’?”

“What? That matter has already been decided. They will try to find out the truth behind you and Subaru-sama coming to school together. I think that in a short time, assassins will start coming after you.”

Assassins? I wonder what kind of assassins. Maybe ninjas descending from the ceiling?

“And even before that, there are some strange rumors about you being passed around the school.”

“Strange rumors?”

“Some rumors say that you are gay.”

This time, I was really blown up. What’s up with this silly information? I was really so surprised that I thought my heart would be struck out.

“Aah, was it wrong?”

“Of course!”

“Maybe you are…bisexual?”

“Don’t make fun of me to my face! Why would you think so!? And why are such unfounded rumors about me being circulated in the academy?”

“Err. That’s because you never talk to girls. You never, not even once, tried to approach a girl. This isn’t normal for a high schooler in the bloom of his youth. That’s why this turned into the rumor, ‘Sakamachi Kinjirou is a homosexual guy who doesn’t have the slightest interest in girls.’”

“……”

My head hurt. But this issue was indeed because of my gynophobia. Even if I wanted to, I couldn’t get close to a girl. What a pain. I couldn’t believe that such rumor was circulating…

“Don’t worry. Half of it was a joke, and there are not many people who would believe in such a thing so easily. Besides, I know that you like girls because we have already exchanged erotic magazines in our time together as friends.”

“Kyahahaha,” Kurose laughed.

A dry guy as always. However, I was really thankful that someone was here to tell me about that. It was said that having one person who understood you was enough in school life. Someone who made you feel like family.

“But you really have to be cautious, since inside S4 there are already some fanatics who have misinterpreted your relationship with Konoe. Be cautious when walking at night. That also applies to Subaru-sama. If you two are too close to each other, then things will turn for the worse.”

Saying that, Kurose turned towards the blackboard. At this time, the teacher for first period entered the classroom. Looks like today, our school life will start without problems once again.

I lay across the table while pondering that. There were arrangements to meet with Suzutsuki after school. I would have to reserve some body strength for that. While the teacher started his Buddhist prayer-like lesson[1], my consciousness started to fade away.

The decisive battle would be after school, then.

♀♂

[1] By Buddhist prayer-like lesson, he means that the lesson was droning and boring, just like a Buddhist mantra that extends for hours on end.

Part 3

However, something unexpectedly came flying out of nowhere and put me in a pinch.

“Let’s eat lunch together.”

Lunch break.

Those words of Konoe triggered a reaction. Suddenly, all of the students in the classroom were hit by a bullet called ‘surprise’. That was to be expected, as ‘that’ Subaru-sama, who never let anyone besides Suzutsuki come close to him, was inviting me to have lunch with him. That was as unexpected as saying that dead animals had been found floating in the Tamagawa River.

“Hey, hey…Konoe invited a commoner to eat lunch with him.”

“It seems like the two also came to school together this morning.”

I could hear my classmates whispering awful things to each other about us.

This is bad. This situation couldn’t become any worse.

“I can’t believe…that the rumors about Jirou were true…”

“Eeh, what rumors? Tell me! Tell me!”

There’s no truth in those rumors. Besides, I never, even for one second, had those kind of tastes.

“Damn…putting his hands on Subaru-sama…I won’t let it happen…”

“I will kill him. Kill him, kill him, kill him. That damn four eyes, I will tie his hands and feet together and dip him into concrete…”

Sorry, my eyes hurt. Don’t direct those dangerous killing intents over here. I won’t be able to go to the bathroom alone in the middle of the night.

“Ji—, Jirou…you…”

Kurose, who was at my side, looked at me with the same eyes as a mother would look at her child with when he was in his rebellious phase.

“It’s not like that! This is a misunderstanding.”

“What is a misunderstanding? Anyways, we’ll be going.”

Konoe kept pushing me along while I tried to make excuses. This time, the mood in the classroom became suspicious. In the class, only Konoe was smiling joyfully.

“Hey! Where are you trying to take me!?”

I could feel their gazes piercing my body.

“For the time being, we will go to a place that is not popular. I can’t relax if the place is noisy like this.”

We looked like a dating couple.

“Don’t get me wrong. It’s not like I want to eat lunch with you. This is also a part of your monitoring because I can’t tell what you are doing if you are away from me.”

Konoe said that without looking at me. It felt as if I was being treated like a dog in its mating season. If that really was the case, then she would have also put a choker on me.

“Okay, if that’s the case, then how about going to the rooftop? I don’t think there are many people around there.”

I decided to agree with the idea, since we were going to finish lunch quickly anyway. Also, if I was against every little thing, I would certainly be beaten again.

I went to the store to buy my lunch, since I didn't have such a jealousy-causing item like a bento. Konoe came together with me. Since every meal that she prepared was somehow lethal, she usually ate school meals. That was unexpected. Looked like Subaru-sama also had something that she was bad at.

"Uhh—…"

Konoe was staring seriously at a bread roll. It seems like this was her first time coming to the store.

I was also checking the bread. Today's recommended dish was…kimchi sandwiches? Don't joke with me. Stop with this Korean influence already.

"Let's go with a yakisoba bread or a cornet with chocolate cream[1], since the others have vegetables."

[1] In British-English, "cornet" means ice cream cone. However, the meaning here refers to a Japanese-styled cornet. These are pastry cones filled with chocolate cream or vanilla custard.

That being said, I normally bought croquette bread or curry bread. To tell the truth, I didn't have enough money, so I couldn't afford to be luxurious. The CD of one of my favorite bands was going to be released later this month, so I couldn't afford any wasteful expenditures. Save money, save money.

"I want the yakisoba bread and the cornet with chocolate cream… And a croquette bread and a curry bread, and also fried pork and negi[2] on skewers, and a mince cutlet. Also, I should get strawberry milk…"

Konoe was buying a mountain of breads and vegetables like there was no tomorrow. The granny of the store was also very surprised. She had the expression of a mother who was once again meeting her son after ten years of separation due to loan debts.

After finishing the purchase, we climbed the stairs to the rooftop.

The truth was that access to the rooftop was forbidden, but regarding an unpopular place, I couldn't think of any other place than that. There was also the corner of the courtyard, but from the second floor and above, you could clearly see the spot. If I hadn't considered that, I would probably have been bombed by Konoe's fans.

---

2 Negi is the Japanese name for Welsh onion.

Luckily, the door that led to the rooftop wasn't locked. The moment I opened the door, I could feel the warm sunlight, and a pleasantly light breeze hit my cheeks. It looked as if the morning rain had never happened.

Hmm, this is not bad. It had a refreshing view and was also unpopular. It was as if my heart was doing a little Cossack dance.

I sat on the base of the fence in the corner. Well, let's eat, let's eat. I was opening the croquette bread while thinking that food was indeed the basis of humankind.

"……"

Konoe was standing there confused with her eyes swimming. Additionally, her expression looked like she wouldn't calm down. Don't tell me that she was cautious because of a sniper or something like that.

"What are you doing? Hurry up and sit down."

"……."

"Hey, don't ignore me. You were the one who called me to eat."

"Uh…I understand. Then I'm going to sit?"

Konoe sat timidly at my side and started to eat her bread silently. Unsociable as always, she looked like a stray cat and, as usual, was incredibly cautious.

“By the way, is it okay for you to leave Suzutsuki like that? Aren’t you her butler?”

Since the both of us were just eating silently, I straight up asked that question.

But there was no response.

That was the signal that I had to throw another straight ball.

“Hey, at least catch the ball. Because we are eating lunch together.”

“Shut up, pervert.”

She silenced the conversation in one blow.

End of conversation.

Let’s go back to the mound.

Speaking in baseball terms, she hit me straight in one line.

"…I've already apologized for that incident this morning… And besides, I wasn't wearing my glasses, so I couldn't see it very well."

"Don't make excuses. And I usually eat lunch alone, so I don't have the habit of talking during the lunch break."

"You know…there are two of us here now… or don't tell me that you are also like this when you are with Suzutsuki?"

"……"

No answer.

Hey, hey, don't tell me that I nailed it?

Now that I think about it, I have never seen Konoe and Suzutsuki having a long conversation. I have often seen them together, but it was more like a master-servant relationship. I have never seen them having any pointless conversations.

"I am the butler of my Ojou-sama. As long as I can do this job, nothing else matters."

"Job?"

“Ah, protecting Ojou-sama. That is my most important mission.”

“Mission, huh…”

That being said, calling her a bodyguard would fit her better than calling her a butler. Well, if her only goal was only to protect Suzutsuki, then there was no need for conversation. But they were in the same year, so they should try to get along a little more.

“Okay, but this time, let’s talk. It’s more fun to talk while you eat.”

At least, those were my feelings.

If I started eating without talking, I would completely lose my appetite.

“Do you always eat with someone like this?”

“Aah, it seems like I’m always eating with Kurose because since middle school, he has always been together with me.”

“Middle school? Since I didn’t go to one, I don’t really understand much about it.”

I dropped the croquette bread that was in my hands.

"…What? You didn't go to a middle school?"

"Ojou-sama and I started with high school. We didn't go to a primary school or a middle school. We had our names registered, but we didn't go to school even once. That's because things had been determined to be that way."

Saying that it was already determined, Suzutsuki's family must have made the decision without even hearing her out.

I don't really understand how rich people think. Sure, I understand that they care about their children, but isn't being overprotective a bad thing?

"That's why the first time we came to this school, I couldn't tell left from right. Well, Ojou-sama is intelligent and has good manners, thus she could adapt in no time. But for me, it was impossible."

Konoe said that while biting into the cornet with chocolate cream.

Impossible, huh…? I won't say that it wasn't. Suddenly coming to high school, anyone would be confused. The reason why I'm now having fun with friends in this school is probably that I got used to it from walking in groups.

But Konoe doesn't have that.

She felt like a driver who, only recently having acquired a driving license, was driving on the highway. To suddenly become afraid and press on the brakes would not be strange. Thinking that way, I felt really bad for her.

“That’s why I have never eaten lunch with a friend like you have.”

Konoe said that with an unusually weak voice.

“…Call me.”

“Eh…?”

“Oh no, nothing…”

Shit. Looks like I moved my mouth without realizing it.

“What I wanted to say was that you should call me properly by my name. I’m also calling you [Konoe], after all. My name is Sakamachi Kinjirou. Since it’s long, you can call me Jirou. Everyone in the class and even Suzutsuki calls me that, haven’t you seen?”

If you stopped to think, Konoe hasn’t called me by my name even once. That was a little disgusting, since it gave the feeling that we were not equal.

“But… is it okay?”

“What?”

“Being called in a friendly way…you don’t dislike it?”

“What a troublesome guy. Since a long time ago, I have had this nickname. Besides, I think that it’s creepy to be called by any other name than that. That’s why you can call me by that name!”

“But we have only eaten lunch together… Is it really okay?”

“Eating lunch together, talking about pointless things. That’s what friends are for.”

The definition of ‘friends’… such a thing doesn’t exist. But being friends with such an unsociable guy was a little annoying.

She was silent.

She was silently looking like she was thinking about something.

“Th—, then I will call you…Ji, Jirou…”

She said that and blushed. What was so embarrassing in calling my name?

At that moment, I became speechless.

…This girl. She was so cute. As expected of Subaru-sama, the title of the most beautiful guy in the school was not just for show.

I was nearly hypnotized by her.

“O, oh. Well done…”

Trying to hide my embarrassment, I spoke in a blunt tone.

When I took a look at Konoe who was at my side, I saw that she was repeating [Jirou, Jirou…] countless times. What’s that? If you try, you can succeed.

—And.

Unexpectedly, Konoe’s head inclined and hit my shoulder.

“Huh? Don’t tell me that you are feeling sleepy?”

Konoe was yawning while rubbing her eyes.

“No… It’s not that. It’s not like I’m feeling sleepy.”

While saying that, he clearly had a sleepy expression on his face.

“You can go ahead and sleep. I will wake you up when it’s time for class.”

“I don’t need you to worry about me. Look, I can soon get rid of this sleepy fe—”

Right after saying that, Konoe closed her eyes and fell asleep. Looks like it was her consciousness that gave way first. Aah, the weather is so good that I don’t feel like doing anything.

With his powerless body turned up, I could see a beautiful view of him. Uhn, he is indeed cute. Even being a guy, he has such a cute sleeping face…

“… Eh? Wait wait wait wait!”

I forgot. Since she was wearing a boy’s uniform, I completely forgot, but she was a girl.

Um, um, it seems that in my head, I still thought of Konoe as a guy. That's why I sometimes can't help but to make contact with her like a guy. For that reason, I didn't have a nosebleed.

While I was thinking that, suddenly *Gatcha* the door to the rooftop was opened.

The person who entered was looking straight at me and Konoe.

"Heh, that's a rare occasion."

An elegant female student was coming this way with her long, black hair flowing in the wind. That was Suzutsuki. Did she come to see how Konoe and I were doing? But how did she know that we were here? Did she put trackers on us when we were not paying attention?

"Fufu, she is sleeping. This is rare, for Subaru to sleep at the side of another person."

"Is this so rare?"

"Right now, she is giving the impression of a wild cat riding a Harley that's driving against the traffic on the highway."

What kind of feeling was that? Even though it sounded like a suggestion when she said that was rare, I couldn't read the same through Suzutsuki's expression.

Cool and beautiful as always. We are supposed to be the same age, but Suzutsuki gave off a more adult feeling. I can't feel relaxed with her presence.

"The line of tension was probably cut off."

"Line? Well, now that you say that, Konoe was a little strange today. But why?"

I knew that I was probably being targeted. If that's the case, I had to run to a blind spot fast.

"Why… That's certainly because she was going to meet you."

"Ha?"

What is that? Why would Konoe be tense about meeting someone like me? I am not Golgo 13[3].

[3] Golgo 13 is a manga about a professional assassin, you can get more information here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golgo

“For Subaru, thinking about talking to you was freezing her nerves. She was so tense last night that she almost couldn’t sleep.”

“…… But, aren’t these things pretty normal?”

“Normal? If we are talking about you, maybe. For Subaru, from the very start to the very end, everything is a new experience: going to school, talking with another person that’s not me, eating lunch together. Until now, she has never done any of these. That’s because even if she wanted to have friends, she couldn’t have them.”

“Certainly, Konoe has no friends, but…”

But even if she wanted to, she couldn’t do that. Even if you say that she started high school a year late, she should get used to…

“Not having and not being able to have are two different things. Think about it. Subaru has a secret that no one in this school can discover, and that is the fact that she is a girl.”

“……Ah.”

I finally understood the meaning of Suzutsuki’s words.

Konoe has no other option but to hide her secret from other people.

What do you have to do to hide it?

It's simple.

‘’’You just have to not relate with other people.’’’

“There is a lot of trouble involving Subaru being my butler, you know. That's because she can't let anyone discover her secret. Hence, she doesn't let anyone besides me be close to her. She fears having her secret exposed.”

This was so easily said, but for Konoe, this fact was very painful.

Even if she wanted friends, for the sake of hiding her secret, she can't make them. Her loneliness in the class… She wasn't alone only because she wanted to be.

“To Subaru, I am her master. I think that to her, I am not someone that she can call a friend, even though in the past we had a good relationship. She even used to call me [Kana-chan]. However, even Subaru has finally found someone in the school with who she can be friends.”

Suzutsuki smiled calmly.

“Jirou-kun. Since you already know Subaru’s secret, you are the one who can be friends with her. I am pretty sure that she was nervous because this was her first time talking to a classmate. She didn’t want to miss that chance, so I think she worked hard in her own way.”

“……”

Then, you are saying that she wanted to be friends with me? …Isn’t she a fool? If it’s like that, she could have just told me.

“This is a happy result for me, and for the side who got a chance.”

“But now that I think about it, you were the one who ordered Konoe to approach me.”

“Indeed, I am also thankful to you.”

“Please stop! I will get embarrassed.”

“Fufu, what an embarrassed guy. I will give you this for being like that.”

“…? What is it?”

She handed me a little piece of paper. This is a… ticket? But what for?

“If I had to give it a name, I would call it a ‘Butler Ticket’. It’s the same as a shoulder massage ticket. If you use that, you will be able to, only once, give orders to Subaru.”

“Orders, you say…”

“She can take off her top and say [Please lick me] while spilling honey onto her breasts. You are even able to do this kind of perverted thing.”

“Sadly, I don’t have this pleasant inclination.”

“Silence. Subaru will wake up.”

“Uuh…”

“If you don’t want to use it, you don’t need to, but this is my thanks to you.”

Suzutsuki bowed elegantly, standing in that place. Muu, as expected from an ojou-sama, her behavior somehow became kind. Leaving that alone…

“Hey, there is something that I want to ask you.”

“What is it?”

“What is that thing that is drawn on the butler ticket?”

I stared at the ticket I had received. Drawn on it was— a strange four legged being.

“That is the illustration of a sheep that I drew. I tried to draw a sheep butler. I thought that sometimes, it would be okay to make some useless jokes.”[4]

“A sheep, you say…”

This? This strange onigiri-shaped avant-garde drawing? This has to be a joke. What an original artistic sense. Even Picasso’s Guernica[5] is more understandable than that.

“That was a good drawing, right? The truth is that since my childhood, I have wanted to be a painter. But since I had to inherit the family, I couldn’t do that.”

---

4 The joke here is that she tried to draw a sheep 『羊』 (hitsuji) butler 『執事』 (shitsuji). The pronunciation of the words is close to each other.

5 Guernica I guess everyone who has studied in high school should know what is, but anyway, Wikipedia can explain better. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guernica_%28painting%29

“Heeh. That’s a shame…”

Truly a shame. If this crazy talent was presented to the world, maybe she would get to learn how severe society really is.

“Ah, and by the way, be on guard from now on. The classroom is full of rumors about you and Subaru.”

“Geh…”

“Then, let’s meet again after school. I will be waiting.”

Suzutsuki left the rooftop with a smile on her face.

She is taking this too lightly. Because of that, now I can’t help but to fear returning to the classroom.

From my side, “Haha, Kana-chan… I can’t eat anymore.” Such sleep-talk could be heard. She had a happy sleeping face. Maybe she is having a dream from her childhood days.

Aah, I also wanted to go to the dream world.

I deeply sighed, thinking about how I would avoid the problems that would be coming next.

Part 4

Looking at the outcome.

Luckily, no problems had arisen yet.

I was expecting the girls of the class to thrust a knife into me while saying such things as “Ahaha… Jirou-kun is at fault… since you laid your hands on my Subaru-sama.” But when Konoe and I arrived at the classroom, such a thing didn’t happen. The class had no reaction to the event. It was so calm that it started to feel creepy.

From what I had heard from Kurose, this was the calm before the storm. The information that Konoe and I had gone to eat lunch together had already spread all over the academy, and the biggest Konoe fan faction, [S4], had sent an assault force to apprehend me.

But on the verge of the assault, an intervention group had appeared.

Their name was the [Let’s Watch Over Subaru-sama with Warm Eyes Committee]. They were the fans of Konoe that left [S4] and created a new faction. In other words, an internal division.

This group was created under the notion of monitoring Konoe’s behavior before making a judgment.

I thought, 'I feel relieved that even in the middle of Konoe's fans, there are serious people'… But in reality, I was wrong.

The [Let's Protect Subaru-sama with Warm Looks Committee] is, well… A group of girls that have that kind of hobby.

In other words, it was a group of fujoshi[1].

In a fearsome move, they had already made a group to produce BL stories involving me and Konoe. Where are the warm looks? This is much too half-hearted.

Anyway, in regards to the actual situation, these two factions are in a cold war.

They will soon have a real war, so until that happens, dealing with me was put on hold. I am relieved, but at the same time I'm feeling somewhat confused, as if I had been sent into a colony during the Second World War.

Fortunately, the boys will simply be watching this battle from the sidelines. Kurose also didn't really believe that Konoe and I had that kind of relationship, but he did ask, "Did you two already kiss?" For the time being, I punched him in the stomach.

---

1 A fujoshi is a female fan of yaoi, or "boy's love" (BL) culture.

And then, after school.

It's time for the decisive battle.

Finally, the treatment program for my gynophobia headed by Suzutsuki Kanade will start.

"—And? Why a game center, Suzutsuki?!"

I asked Suzutsuki, who was on the other end of the phone.

"Ara, would it have been better if it was at a hotel? Even though I thought that this much would be the right level for a first date."

The voice was speaking freely. Is there any kind of spell that I can use to blow up a person over the phone? If there's anyone who knows it, I urgently need this person to teach me. For the sake of world peace, I have to somehow bury this ojou-sama.

"I said it before, didn't I? That your gynophobia was a result of your continuous fear towards women. Then, to get rid of your phobia, we will need you to get used to normal girls.

That's why you forced me on this date.

This time, I was in front of a game center in the city neighboring the one that Konoe and I go to school in. Once school had ended, I had received a call from Suzutsuki telling me to come here.

Well, as expected, we didn't have the courage to go to the game center close to the academy. It wouldn't be strange for my name to be written in a shinigami[2] note if someone from the academy saw us in our current situation.

Yeah, I'm on a date with that Subaru-sama.

Geez, I'm more surprised that Konoe would do this much for me. Even though they were Suzutsuki's orders, to have to go on a date with me… And yesterday she was so against me… I wonder if there's a reason.

"By the way, where are you right now?"

I asked Suzutsuki, who was on the other end of the call. When I arrived, there was no one else waiting besides Konoe (who was, for some strange reason, carrying an enormous sports bag over her shoulder).

"If you want to know about me, I am in a nearby manga café reading [Jo*o's Bizarre Adventure] since it would be bad for me to bother your alone time."

---

2 God of death. A shinigami note is basically a Death Note.

What an elegant position. I also want to read Jo*o!

“Then, shall we start? First, Subaru, try touching Jirou-kun’s body.”

“Understood, Ojou-sama.”

Konoe carefully reached out towards my chest. It felt like she was disarming a time bomb. Carefully, Konoe touched my fingertips with her own.

“So, how is it?”

“How’s what?”

“Aren’t you feeling horny?”

“Like I would! How ‘hungry’ do you think I am?!”

“This is strange… I was sure that I had mixed it in with the bread you had bought.”

“What did you mix in there?”

"Buf*beep*rin."[3]

"Buf*beep*rin? Why would you use such a medicine?"

"You are just another modern person with a sick heart. That's why you need the tenderness of the Buf*beep*rin."

"Why is this person suddenly talking so seriously?!"

"One of my acquaintances drank Buf*beep*rin and grew 5 centimeters. Also, there're people who were 'shut-ins' and underwent a successful rehabilitation because of it.

"That has nothing to do with Buf*beep*rin!"

"—That tenderness… will save the world."

"Don't try to end everything with such forced cool words!"

Brik The cell phone screen made a sound. That was close; I almost crushed the device.

---

[3] A reference to Bufferin, a medicine used to treat pain, fevers, inflammation, and sore throats.

“Let’s stop messing around now.”

This just now was messing around? I wonder how powerful your straight act would be. I am starting to worry about the conclusion of the conversation.

“How is it, Jirou-kun? Did you start having a nosebleed?”

“…? It didn’t.”

I wiped my face, but as expected, I was completely unhurt.

“This is kind of strange. You do realize that you just touched a girl?”

“Ah…”

Now that she said that… I was being touched by Konoe—by a girl, but my body didn’t have the slightest reaction.

“As I thought. Somewhere in your mind, you have yet to recognize Subaru as a girl. That’s why you didn’t develop any symptoms from being touched. This time, we’ll use that method.”

After Suzutsuki took a breath…

“Then, mission start. Start by taking off your clothes, Subaru.”

“Roger, Ojou-sama.”

“Wait a momeeeeent!”

I leaned over and yelled with all my might.

“What is wrong, Jirou-kun? This is for your sake.”

“Shut up! You are jumping several steps right from the start! What are you trying to make your butler do?”

Telling her to take her clothes off in this place with a lot of people… I wonder why this girl thinks about such dangerous things. Maybe there’s a nuclear missile installed in her head?

“What are you saying? When did I tell her to undress here?”

“Heh?”

When I looked back at Konoe, she was going into the game center. This would really generate a legal problem…

“Don’t worry, she will undress in the bathroom.”

“Heh? What you mean by that?”

“Fufu, this plan is perfect. You don’t recognize Subaru as a girl yet, so this is very favorable. If you dated a normal girl from the start, the stimulus would be too strong.

“I understand that. In other words, you want me to get acclimated bit by bit, right?”

Like training with auxiliary wheels on a bike, from what I understand, the plan is to start with the Konoe that I still didn’t recognize as a woman and step by step get used to her touch.

“But why are you making Konoe undress?”

“Soon, you will understand. But in the meantime—”

“In the meantime?”

“Don’t pass out from the shock, okay?”

“Hah?”

I didn’t understand what she meant.

But a few minutes later, I understood the words in an instant.

Konoe came out of the game center wearing a Rouran Academy girl’s uniform.

“__”

Crap. I could certainly pass out from the shock.

She was extremely cute.

Below the skirt, there were slender legs. Wearing knee long socks, she had beautiful leg lines that stood out. Maybe it was because she was even wearing a ribbon in her hair, but with these looks, she really did radiate a feminine feeling. Rather, it suited her incredibly well. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that she was born just for the sake of wearing this uniform.

“Looks like Subaru is back. Are you okay? Are you keeping your senses?”

“Aah… Somehow.”

I see, so that was the reason for that sports bag. She prepared a change of clothes just for this occasion. I'm amazed.

"Somehow… I have the feeling that even her breasts are bigger."

I murmured that in a tone that Konoe couldn't hear.

"It's because of the corset. Normally, Subaru holds her breasts back with a corset, even if it's not so useful. Right now, she is wearing a padded bra.

"Heh… I see…"

Wait a second. Isn't a corset a hard object? Yesterday when I touched her breasts, I'm sure that they were soft.

"By the way, yesterday, Subaru forgot to put on the corset. So what you touched yesterday in the science room was—"

"It's okay, Suzutsuki. Don't tell me any more than this."

The memories in my head and my own senses were clashing inside of my brain like the battle of Dan-no-ura [4]. Good luck, senses. If you lose here, I will fall off the path of a normal person.

“Then, Jirou-kun, let’s continue. Starting now, you will have a date at the game center with Subaru in this appearance. If something happens, please contact me.”

“Hey, wait, Suzutsuki! Don’t cut the call!”

Being alone with today’s Konoe is dangerous. Konoe in these clothes doesn’t look like anything but a girl! Actually, she is a girl. I better get used to this, or the game center will be dyed a bloody color.

“Work hard, okay? I can’t release my hands right now…”

“What? Did something happen in the manga café?”

“Err… A serious situation. The Nara*cia inside Gio*no’s body is going to… ”[5]

“For the time being, stop reading J*jo!”

---

[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Dan-no-ura has good references.

[5] Reference from Jojo here.

Even though I was about to cry in this situation, this girl was far too relaxed. Even though she is just an ojou-sama, she is enjoying the manga café too much.

Tuu The line was cut. Damn it, Devil Suzutsuki! She prioritized a manga over me.

“Hey… Jirou. I wonder… is it strange…?”

Konoe said that while fiddling with her very short skirt.

“Aa, aah. This suits you a lot.”

As proof of it, people’s stares started gathering here. I’m truly happy that we don’t have any acquaintances here.

“I wonder… To tell the truth, this uniform… I have always wanted to wear it at least once…”

Konoe was happily turning around while waving her skirt.

I think that she must have really wanted to wear girl’s clothes. Normally, she would have no opportunities to wear them since she is living as a man.

“Then, let’s go! Let’s cure Jirou’s phobia!”

Subaru-sama energetically ran towards the entrance of the game center. I followed her and also entered the game center. This is an absolutely radical treatment, right?

“Jirou, what is this?”

Upon entering the game center, Konoe fixed her eyes on the crane game. Maybe this was her first time in a game center.

“This game is called ‘UFO Catcher’. You insert money, and then you use your ability to catch the things inside.”

“Oh!”

No matter how you looked at it, she didn’t hear my explanation. Konoe was drooling on the glass case like a girl with her eyes on a dress.

I wondered what she was so interested in and took a peek. Inside the glass case, there was a pile of [Silent Sheep] stuffed toys.

“……”

Hey, is that really okay?

The design was that of a cute, deformed sheep, but if you look closely, you will notice a sharpened burr. And around the mouth, there was something red leaking. I don't know why, but when I look at it, I start to remember that doctor that appeared in that movie. Your favorite food isn't humans, is it?

"…So cute…"

With this behavior, even I could tell that she liked it. She had some unexpectedly girlish tastes, but the tastes were a bit weird.

It looked like she wanted it so much that when I asked, "Do you want me to grab it?" she nodded intensely. Since it had been a long time since I last played, it took me a thousand yen, but I was able to get that ominous sheep. When I gave it to her…

"Uwaa…! So cute…!"

Aah, very cute indeed… But so are you.

Just from seeing this smile, I started to think that it was worth spending a thousand yen. But thanks to that, I can say good bye to the CD that I was planning to buy this month. If it keeps going on like this, I will bankrupt myself. Financing the butler's hobbies doesn't fit even as a joke.

"…?"

Thinking about it, I remembered the existence of that. I took a ticket from my pocket, the [Butler Ticket] from before. I wonder if I can really use this.

"Hey, Konoe. Do you know about this?"

I showed the [Butler Ticket] to Konoe who was hugging the stuffed toy… But her expression suddenly froze.

"This is impossible… why do you have that?"

"Why, you ask… Obviously, Suzutsuki gave it to me… More importantly, is it true that you will obey any order I give if I use this?"

"……"

Konoe became silent and turned completely pale-faced.

I see, looks like it's true. What should I do? Should I use it in this opportunity? Err, according to the explanation that is written on the ticket… In the moment that it's torn apart, a master-slave contract is established.

** I ripped the ticket apart.

When I did that, she awkwardly smiled.

“—wh, what are your orders? Master.”

“…….”

……

Aah, err… What should I say…

This is dangerous.

This has more destructive power than I thought. She even called me ‘Master’. I can’t, I can’t. I feel like I could step down the wrong path if this keeps up.

“Look, Konoe is now my butler, right?”

“…! Ye, yeah… Just like you said… Master.”

Konoe's eye lids were trembling. It looks like she wasn't used to being ordered around by anybody besides Suzutsuki. Well, I don't want to make some unreasonable request here, so… Let's issue a small order.

"Try saying 'meeh'."

"What?"

The butler-kun replied with an expression that said that she couldn't believe that her Master had given such an order.

"Geez, I told you to say 'meeh'. You like sheep, don't you? That's why it should be simple."

"~~~~…!"

After a silent moment, she moved her trembling lips.

And then, with her eyes full of tears.

"Me, meeh~."

And.

She mewled like a little sheep that was being attacked by a wolf.

That was a good performance.

……

I wonder why, but I have the feeling that I did something that a person shouldn't do.

Besides, even though Konoe likes sheep, it looks like she doesn't enjoy acting like one. Why are you looking at me with the eyes of someone who wants revenge for his parents?

"…Master."

"Wh, what? The effects of the Butler Ticket are already gone, so you can go back to normal now."

"—No, what are you saying… I am Master's butler, right?"

"……!"

Wh—What a problem.

She had an ear-to-ear smile, but her eyes weren't smiling even a bit!

"Aah, Master. There's dust on your head."

"!? No, stop, Konoe! If it's just dust, then I can take care of it myself."

Soon, the distance between me and Konoe was closed. I was so nervous that my goose bumps had a standing ovation. Then, Konoe's face was very close, so close that I could kiss her like this.

"Is there something wrong, Master? You are trembling so much… Are you cold? If that is the case, should I warm you up?"

She said that right into my ear. This won't work. The inside of my nose was beginning to tingle. It's the sign that my nosebleed will start.

"So- sorry. My bad! I apologize! I didn't want you to act like an herbivorous animal! So please, don't get any closer to me! If you continue any further, I will faint…"

"Calm down, Master."

The butler-kun was smiling tenderly like the Virgin Mary.

“Do you think that I will forgive you if you simply faint?”

Aah.

I fear that once I lose my consciousness, an even worse punishment will be waiting for me.

I want to at least not be tied up and suspended when I wake up, I thought.

At the moment I thought that.

“Gyaha!”

A shock attacked my body.

A drop kick.

My body was thrown aside from the shock of that energetic surprise attack.

While surprised from the meaningless attack, I tried to fall safely and rolled across the floor of the game center.

My vision was spinning. Inside of it, the one who had given me a great drop kick to the side of my head—was a good-looking girl in a short skirt.

Sakamachi Kureha.

There's no way I'd be mistaken. That was the arrival of my little sister.

"Ku-kureha! What are you doing in such a place?!"

I said that while I shifted my glasses. My neck was squeaking. It was an attack that should have broken the bones of a normal person.

"'What are you doing?' is what I want to ask, Nii-san!"

The voice of my little sister was trembling with rage.

"There was a strange rumor at the academy… I heard that Nii-san was going out with a guy. I thought that there was no way that it could be true, but since I was so worried, I followed you from the academy."

"You followed… Were you tailing us?"

Like a stalker. Stalking your brother, that's not a laughing matter.

“Yeah. And then… I never thought that such a thing would happen. Well, how about you say something, Konoe-senpai?”

Konoe’s body was trembling due to Kureha’s words.

Damn.

No matter how you look at Konoe now, she is a girl. If someone sees her, they’ll notice immediately. If the truth that Subaru-sama is a girl was spread…

“I never thought that you had such a secret…”

Kureha pointed to Konoe like a great detective that had solved a trick.

Then she firmly asserted.

“To think that you were a pervert that liked to cross-dress as a girl!”

““Ha!””

Konoe and I both released completely surprised voices.

……

I'm glad.

I'm so glad that my little sister is an idiot.

Looks like we were able to avoid the worst situation.

"I thought that something was strange ever since you came to our house this morning! You thieving cat! You're tricking my Nii-san!"

"Wait, what are you saying, you idiot! There's no way that—"

"Nii-san, you be quiet."

Fuu Fuu Kureha stopped my words like a wounded beast.

"Everything…! I was watching everything! The moment that Nii-san gave a stuffed toy to the cross-dressing Konoe-senpai, the moment that you two came so close that you could hug each other… And the most extreme was…"

Large tear drops started accumulating in my sister's eyes.

“Kiss… You tried kissing even though the two of you are boys!”

…It’s over.

Something inside my heart announced that.

Well, now that I stop to think, since a long time ago, Kureha’s thoughts have been extreme. From my experience, I can tell that now that it has come to this point—she will soon run rampant and won’t hear anyone.

“Konoe-senpai… No matter how cute you are… Even if you are the cutest boy in the academy… Trying to seduce my brother…!”

It feels like I’m looking at a ticking time-bomb.

“Give back… Give my Nii-san back!”

My little sister exploded.

At the same time she screamed, she started speeding like a bullet in Konoe’s direction!

By the time I tried to warn her, Konoe’s body had already started moving.

That was probably a reflexive movement to defend her own body. Kureha was coming in a straight line. Konoe released her restrained left fist—

“Don’t take me so lightly!”

Kureha avoided Konoe’s fist with the slightest of movements. Next, she grabbed Konoe’s wrist, and then she entwined her feet as if to send the butler flying away.

A jumping arm bar.

That was undoubtedly the name of that technique. Since I was the one used as a trial horse for it, I could clearly tell.

Submission.

Kureha was calmly trying to decide Konoe’s moves.

Konoe had lost her balance and was lying on the ground. Now that things had turned out like this, the rest was easy to tell. Kureha will stretch the arm that she had grabbed and completely break Konoe’s elbow…!

“This is the true power of the Rouran Academy Handicrafts Club!”

Kureha yelled that as if she had already won.

No, a normal member of the handicrafts club would never be able to execute such a submission technique to that degree. I tried using sarcasm, but this wasn't the time for that.

As expected from Kureha, she wasn't just playing with me for over ten years. But if it keeps on like this, Konoe's arm will really…

"!!"

It was at the moment that I thought that Kureha's technique had already been delivered.

Swap Konoe turned her body. Surprisingly, Konoe rolled her body forward by herself and used that rotational power to break out of Kureha's lock.

"Hehh…"

Kureha's face was mixed with consternation. Maybe she was irritated from having her arm lock thrown off, but she was a moment late in regaining her posture.

And in that moment… Konoe didn't let her escape.

A middle kick.

A strong middle kick was released right into Kureha's face when she was rising from a kneeling position.

"Gyaaa!"

She somehow made a guard with both her arms, but the strength behind that kick was so large that the moment she received it, she was sent flying back.

"He- hey, Kureha!"

I ran next to my little sister, who was lying on the ground.

Kureha was lying down in the shape of the kanji for 'big'[6] with a shocked expression.

Looking at her speechless face, you could realize that the shock was not from the kick's damage, but from the fact that her submission technique was so easily broken, and that she was blown away right after that.

♀♂

[6] 大

“Wh-what, what is this…?”

After abruptly saying those words.

“This… This is cheating!”

“Uwaaa,” Kureha cried and ran away from the game center.

Konoe and I were only able to watch that, dumbfounded.

Part 5

“Sorry, Jirou. I didn’t intend to hit your little sister so forcefully.”

Konoe, who had gone back to wearing men’s clothing, bowed deeply.

After Kureha left, Konoe and I left the game center. Or rather, we ran away. There’s no helping it, since we made such a huge ruckus there. There’s no way that we could stay there.

We were on our way home. ‘Coincidentally’, Suzutsuki and Konoe’s route back home passed right in front of my house, so we went together.

“Don’t be so depressed. If you hadn’t done that, then Kureha wouldn’t have stopped.”

To tell the truth, if Konoe didn’t know any self-defense techniques, it would have been bad. At the very least, her body would have been broken into pieces. Kureha would have been able to do that easily.

“Look, I will pray that due to Subaru’s kick, your little sister won’t wake up to any weird fetishes.”

“Shut up, Suzutsuki!”

Acting so calm. Who do you think is at fault for things having turned out like this?

Aah, I fear arriving home. Kureha will definitely be in berserk mode this time.

“Haah, I wonder if I will have to fix Kumagorou again…”

“…Kumagorou? Who is that?”

Konoe made a dubious face.

“Aah, it’s a big teddy bear that Kureha has had ever since her childhood. It tends to get damaged often, so when this happens I have to fix it.”

“I see. That girl also has a girlish side to her. As expected from a girl.”

“……”

… I can’t say.

To tell the truth, Kumagorou is a stuffed toy that, when I’m not home, becomes a sandbag in place of my body…. I can’t tell anyone. Even if my mouth is ripped apart, I can’t tell a single person.

Kureha used to beat it without mercy. I don't know how many times Kumagorou was found in the burnable trash pile, completely damaged. I've also lost count of how many times I've fixed Kumagorou.

I feel like Kumagorou is more than a stuffed toy, he is a comrade. Kumagorou and I are passing through the bloodshed of the Sakamachi household in a three legged race.

"Then, let's meet again tomorrow."

After accompanying me to the front of my house, the two of them went home.

My house is just a normal house… no. For the people that looked from the outside, it would look like a simple house, but below the house, we have a dojo and a waiting room in the basement. There, Kureha and I had received martial arts training since our childhoods. Even though I was the one who always got beaten.

In the garage, there's an all-red top class sports car, but that was also one of our mom's hobbies. It seems like a long time ago, she used to speed in it through mountain passes. What kind of a street racer were you?

I unlocked the door to the entrance hall.

So, now is the time for the truth. If I don't give a good explanation of today's events to Kureha, I have the feeling that I will have my bones broken and will have to have an operation.

"… I really hope that she doesn't break them."

I opened the door while murmuring things that I didn't want to happen to me even as a joke, but the inside of the house was completely dark.

….This is strange. Kureha was supposed to be back home a long time ago.

While thinking that, I turned the hallway lights on.

A stuffed bear toy lay murdered there.

"Hii!"

I screamed without thinking.

Right in the middle of the hallway was the corpse of a stuffed bear toy, completely torn apart.

It was Kumagorou.

This is bad. Kureha should now be as stormy as the Japanese stock market. This ghastly scene speaks for itself.

What kind of techniques did she use on Kumagorou to make him become like this? Kumagorou's body was so damaged that it seemed almost completely impossible to restore it to its original state. By some chance—I met those inorganic plastic eyes and pupils.

[-- Stay alive.]

I can't believe it. It should be a hallucination. I had the feeling that the stuffed toy that wasn't supposed to have a voice directed its last words to me.

"Kumagorouuuu—"

Aah… Farewell, my beloved comrade. The next time you reincarnate, become a stuffed toy mouse and be loved by your many sons.

I said goodbye to Kumagorou inside of my heart, and then wiped away the hot tears that were flowing from my eyes.

"…Nii-san."

“Ku, Kureha!?”

I once again looked forward after hearing a familiar voice, and Kureha was standing there. And she was still wearing her uniform.

“Welcome back.”

“A, aah, I’m back…”

Heh? She was calmer than I had expected. Or rather, she was somewhat listless. As expected, losing to Konoe was so frustrating that she became depressed.

“Nii-san… Can I ask you something?”

“Wha, what’s that?”

I couldn’t help but to feel nervous about my little sister’s serious speech. Don’t tell me she is going to ask me about my last will and testament. My next words could be my last… Aah, I can’t laugh.

“Is Nii-san is going out with Konoe-senpai?”

“N, no way! He is just a friend of mine. Besides, there’s no way that two guys would become a couple.”

“… I see. Yeah, that’s right. Everything that happened today was just my misinterpretation. Aah, I’m relieved.”

Kureha patted her chest, reassured.

Is this the end? And her face is turning completely red. I wonder if she has caught a cold.

“You see… Nii-san. I want some advice…”

“Advice?”

“Yeah. I like someone…”

“…Ha!?”

“This is the first time that I’ve ever felt like this, and I don’t know what to do…”

“……”

“The truth is… This person is your friend…”

Kureha’s cheeks were dyed crimson from embarrassment.

Warning alert issued. I have a bad feeling about this. It feels like I am enjoying a volleyball game on the beach right when a tsunami is on the verge of crashing on me. It’s going to be a big wave!

“Then, about the advice, Nii-san.”

Kureha was fidgeting due to her embarrassment.

“Does Konoe-senpai have someone he is going out with?”

“I, I wonder. I don’t think that he has anyone.”

“I see. So it’s like that…”

“Hehehe,” Kureha laughed.

“To tell the truth, Nii-san.”

“Wha, what? My dear sister?”

“I was completely defeated by that kick!”

“Eh, hehe…”

“Konoe-senpai is strong and cool.”

“Yeah… I guess so…”

“I… Ended up loving him!”

“……”

This is bad, my father in the heavens.

Your daughter has fallen in love with a girl.

Chapter 3 – A Girl's Melancholy

Part 1

"Ahahahaha!"

The next day.

On the rooftop during lunch break.

Suzutsuki was laughing loudly under the clean white sky.

She was convulsing and laughing so hard that I thought she was going to run out of oxygen.

"…Don't laugh. This is a serious situation."

If I was able to, I would also laugh. But… I can't really believe it. That Kureha would fall in love with Konoe…

"See, wasn't it just as I had said? If you look at the outcome, Jirou's little sister ended up waking up to some weird fetishes."

"Hey, let's stop with this way of talking. If this keeps up, a hole will open up in my stomach from the stress."

Yeah… The reason for all this was that kick.

No, it's not like my little sister has that kind of strange fetish.

[Love someone who is stronger than you].

Now that I think about it, Kureha used to often say this a long time ago.

But sadly, Kureha is a part of the Sakamachi household… She is the heaven-sent child for martial arts.

Undefeated her entire lifetime.

No similarly aged boy had been able to defeat Kureha up until now.

This was the first time that she had tasted defeat.

Konoe Subaru.

She was literally completely beaten by her.

But the problem is…

"Isn't it okay? I think that they suit each other."

"…Are you serious?"

"If the both of them love each other, they can overcome any barrier."

"Honestly, don't expect me to agree. I didn't call you here to act like this."

Konoe is not here right now… Or rather, why didn't I call her to hear this conversation?

Like this, I'm alone with Suzutsuki.

If the boys of the academy saw me in this situation, I would receive a nighttime assault, but I can't bother with this now. In this situation, I have to fight with what I currently have.

"Kureha doesn`t know Konoe's secret. Or do you want it to turn into that kind of relationship?"

"Heh, but lately this kind of romance isn't so strange. Furthermore, there're people with that kind of taste closer than you imagine."

No. I'm guessing that in the whole world, there're very few of those people. I bet they are all living in the Galapagos Islands.

"Anyways, cooperate with me, Suzutsuki. You are also responsible for it."

Suzutsuki stared at me with a dumbfounded expression.

"Yeah… This morning you sent Konoe to my house again."

"Right, was there any problem?"

"A big one. Because of that, I faced a big problem…"

"?" Suzutsuki was once again completely dumbfounded, and I ended up explaining what had happened this morning in my house.

Yeah, about that nightmarish tragedy that had happened early in the morning at the Sakamachi household…

Part 2

"Good morning, Nii-san."

"He-hello, Kureha. What's up? You don't look so well, did you not get enough sleep?"

"Yeah. Somehow, my heart was beating so hard that I couldn't sleep."

"……"

"Heh, now that I look, the color in your face doesn't look so good, did you also not get enough sleep?"

"Aah… My heart kept beating hard, so I couldn't sleep."

"Heh? Nii-san was also excited?"

"No… Don't worry about it, I'm just thinking about a serious matter. Leaving that aside, just take a shower and relax a bit. I will also take a shower after you."

"In that case, thank you. Then I will use it first."

Step step Kureha left the living room and went off towards the dressing room.

After a few seconds, *Gatcha* the sound of the front door opening was heard.

"Good morning, Jirou."

"Ko-Konoe!? What are you doing here?"

"Hmm? This is clearly to go to school tog—no, this is for the sake of keeping an eye on you. That aside, you should lock the front door. This is careless."

"……"

"? Why are you so quiet with that serious face? Was it bad for me to come?"

"N- no, there's nothing to—"

"Nii-saaa~n. The shampoo in the bathtub has run out. Bring me the one that is in the closet…"

Kureha came back to the living room while saying that.

Half naked.

Probably since she was just about to take a shower, she was only wearing underwear.

My little sister, in that shameless appearance, became completely speechless when she saw the visitor.

"……"

"……"

"……"

We were all silent.

While the silence dominated the living room, Kureha's face kept changing colors like a traffic light.

With both eyes wide open, she stared with surprise at one single point.

That, for sure, was Konoe Subaru…

"Nyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!"

The silence was broken.

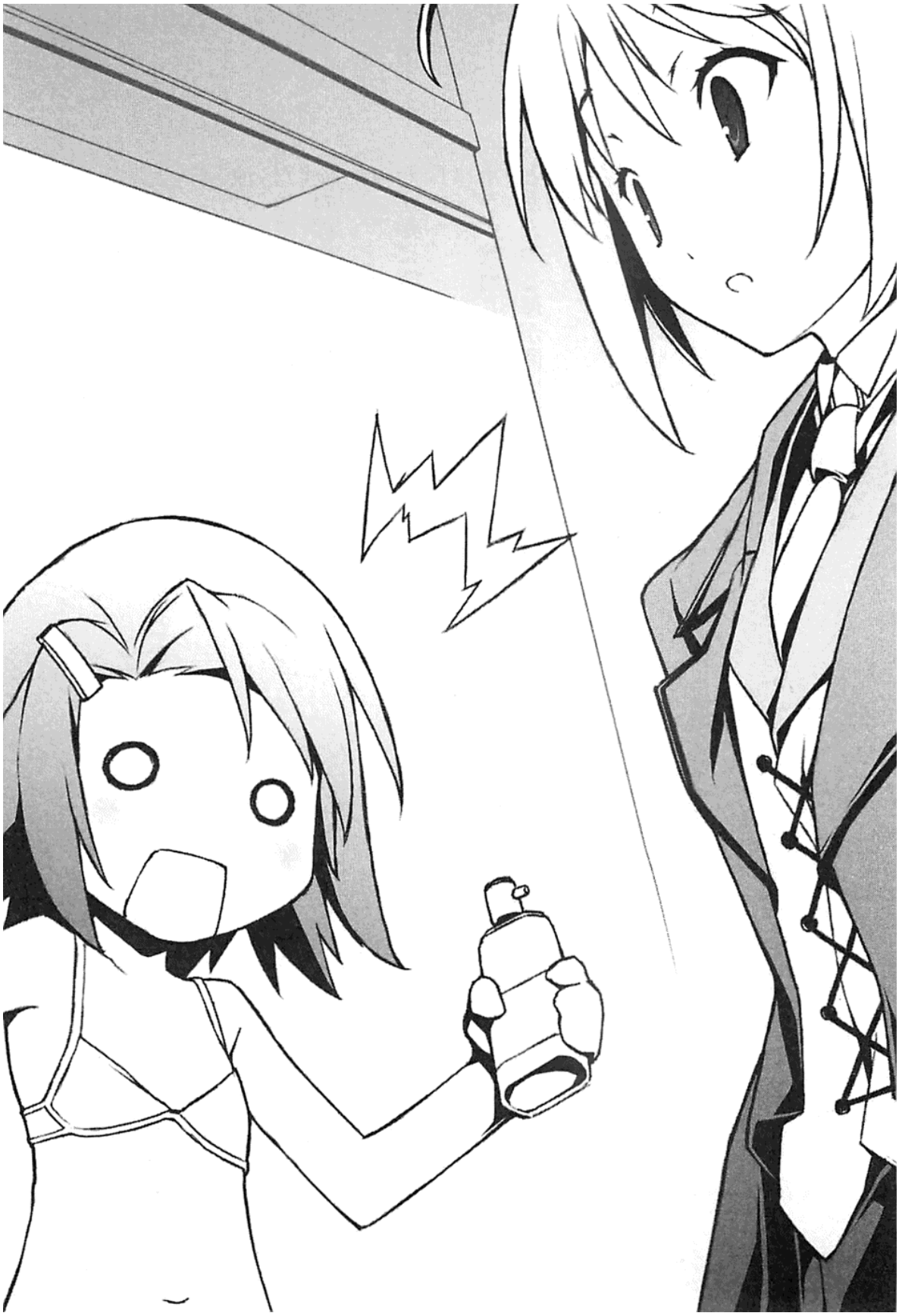
Kureha ran away from the living room while uttering a cry similar to a death scream.

If you think about an escape route, she probably went to her room.

Without anything bad having happened, the living room was once again devoured by the silence.

End of flashback.

This is—The picture of the tragedy that happened to a girl's body early this morning at the Sakamachi household.



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Part 3

"Ahahahahahaha!"

After hearing my story, Suzutsuki erupted into laughter.

"Don't laugh!"

After that incident, no matter what argument I used or what I said, she refused to open the door to her room. Since there was no helping it, I came to the academy before her.

"I wonder if she is okay. I hope that she isn't absent today because of what happened earlier this morning."

"Ah, don't worry about it."

Suzutsuki said confidently.

"Well, she is right there. Your sister."

She pointed behind me.

"Ha?" when I turned around, there was the rooftop's door.

And there were a pair of big pupils peering this way from the gap of the open door.

"Geh."

The moment I raised a moaning voice like in a horror movie.

Doon The door was opened, and from there appeared a short skirt that I was used to seeing.

It was Kureha.

"I was searching for you, Nii-san."

"You… Since when were you there?"

"Just now, I guess. That aside, why is Nii-san together with a celebrity like Suzutsuki Kanade?"

"……"

"…Hmm. If you don't want to tell, you don't need to, since I already understand everything."

"Hai?"

You understand?

What do you understand?

"As expected, Nii-san is going out with Konoe-senpai."

"Why do you always drag the conversation in that direction?!"

I wonder if her thinking circuits are connected to outer space. Just when I thought that she was talking about something seriously, it seems like it was my misinterpretation.

"But, there's no other way to think about it. Yesterday, we had that incident, and today, Konoe-senpai came to get Nii-san."

"Tha- that is…"

Ugh, she has a point.

If you think about what happened yesterday and this morning, you can't help but to think that way.

"And what's more… Nii-san is…"

"Wait a second! What's up with this 'Nii-san is…'!? What kind of older brother do you think I am…"

"…BL?"

"Uwaaaaaaaaa!"

Why is this happening? Why does my family… Why does my little sister think that I am gay!?

"It's okay, Nii-san. I will try to be unprejudiced towards people with this kind of taste."

"Stop it! Don't look at me with such sympathetic eyes! I am undoubtedly a hetero!"

"Yeah, that's right… Nii-san also likes women…"

"What do you mean by [Also]? I really only like women!"

"Yeah, yeah, I get it now…"

"You didn't get it! You didn't get anything!"

"…Then… What is going on? Explain it in a way that I can understand."

"Ugh…"

If I could explain, I would!

But Suzutsuki is here.

I don't know what this woman would do to me if I told Kureha that Konoe was a girl. Maybe she would brainwash us and delete our memories.

I looked to my side, fearing what I would see, but Suzutsuki only sighed.

"I understand. Since it turned out like this, I will tell you the truth."

"Su- Suzutsuki…"

"There's no other way, right? Since it came to this, I can't hide it anymore."

Suzutsuki firmly turned to Kureha's side. And her lips slowly started to release words.

"Sakamachi-san. What you saw wasn't wrong. Subaru… Likes your older brother."

"……"

Wait.

What is she saying so suddenly?

"As I expected…"

Kureha nodded. I wanted to refute this affirmation, but my mouth didn't move due to the shock.

"But relax, Jirou-kun isn't going out with Subaru for now…"

"Heh… Seriously?"

"Yeah, seriously. Because…"

After a pause, Suzutsuki said.

"Jirou-kun is going out with me."

What?

What kind of sensational thing are you saying!?

""Ha?""

I felt like a full swing from a metal bat had struck the back of my head.

"What… What did you say…"

"This… This can't be possible! This has to be a lie. Why would a person like Suzutsuki-senpai go out with Nii-san?"

"`Why` you ask? Is it strange for me to go out with a classmate?"

"That's not it, but…"

"Uuuh," Kureha moaned. From her look, I could tell that she wasn't believing it. This was understandable, since I also didn't understand anything.

"But… No, I won't believe it! If you don't show me proof, I won't believe this story!"

"The birth mark on his side."

Kureha became shocked from those words, as if she had been shot with a gun.

"Jirou-kun has a birth mark on his left side, right? The fact that I know this much should be concrete proof."

"Wh- what do you mean by that…?"

"Oh, do you want to hear?"

She had a dirty smile on her face.

"This is because I removed Jirou-kun's clothes. And of course, in a bed."

Suzutsuki-san was able to say such outrageous things without having the slightest change in her expression.

Of course, she is not technically lying. The truth is that yesterday she removed my clothes on the infirmary's bed. Even though nothing happened.

But my dear sister who didn't know anything about it was stunned and had a completely red face.

"No… This can't… In the bed…"

"I told you, right? I am going out with Jirou-kun. Then isn't it normal?"

"This… This has to be a lie… Nii-san would never…"

Kureha's eyes were spinning. By the way, my mind was already spinning. Just now I was barely able to stand. I couldn't follow such a violent change of situation.

"Bu- but… But Nii-san has problems when girls touch him and…"

"This is okay. Such an obstacle we will overcome with our love. At least, I think like this…"

"……"

Suzutsuki's words were a great shock, and Kureha was already upset. If she had a towel, she would have already thrown it in.

"That's why I want to support you."

"…Eh?"

In a sudden change, she started speaking using soft words.

"I want Subaru to fall in love with a girl. As his master[1], and also as Jirou-kun's lover, I wish that from my heart. That`s why, Sakamachi-san."

[1] There is a pun here when あの娘 is used instead of あの子. Even though they sound the same, the kanji 娘 is used for girls.

She took a ticket from her pocket. This time it wasn't a butler ticket. These were entrance tickets to the Leisure Land that had reopened close by.

But I wonder why there were four of them.

"Let's go play there this Sunday."

"Let's go… Play?"

"Yeah, me, Jirou-kun, Subaru, and you, the four of us. I think that this is called a double date, if I'm not mistaken. Right, doesn't it sound fun for you?"

Suzutsuki smiled gently.

The one who stood there was undoubtedly Suzutsuki Kanade.

The most beautiful girl in the academy.

Her appearance was that of a perfect Ojou-sama.

"Sakamachi-san… No, Kureha-chan. I want you to work hard. And in exchange, I will cheer for you with all I have. Because… In the future, you might end up being my little sister."

With a perfect smile, she shot the final bullet.

It was decided.

No matter how you looked at it, the dispute was settled.

"I understand, Suzutsuki-senpai… No, Onee-sama."

Kureha closed her fists tightly. She should have reached some decision.

"I will definitely save Konoe-senpai from the wrong path!"

"Fufu, thanks, Kureha-chan. I will rest my hopes on you."

Kureha and Suzutsuki held hands firmly.

Looks like there was a deep bond made between them that you couldn't express with words.

……

Well, how do I put it…

Suzutsuki Kanade.

As expected, this girl isn't a normal girl.

To have that Kureha in her hands.

"Then, Onee-sama, I will be heading back to my class. I will be looking forward to this Sunday."

Kureha left the rooftop while energetically waving her hands.

After seeing her go…

"…Hey, Suzutsuki!"

"What? Jirou-kun?"

"What you said just now…"

"Heh. That was pure bullshit. And I just happened to have those tickets by chance."

Suzutsuki was saying that as if nothing had happened.

She is a demon.

After removing the mask of an honors student, once again, Devil Suzutsuki reappeared. Help me, priest! Someone, please request an exorcist from the Vatican to come here.

"But there was no helping it, right? If I didn't tell that lie, Jirou-kun would have ended up revealing Subaru's secret."

"Indeed, but… But for you to say that we are going out…"

"This is okay. She doesn't look like the type that goes around spreading this kind of information."

Right, she isn't that kind of girl, but… Is this really okay? If Konoe hears about it, she will look at me like an enemy that has put his hands on her master and will take my head to the guillotine…

"But… Why are you going to play?"

"Oh, that's why…"

Suzutsuki was laughing.

"Doesn't it sound very interesting? This is the first time I've faced this strange situation since I was born. I can't help but to look forward to Sunday."

"…Seriously…"

I gave up halfway.

I wonder why.

I feel like I'm starting to understand this human called Suzutsuki.

She just likes things that are interesting and make her laugh. Maybe she is just deprived of those. Since she is a sheltered ojou-sama, she shouldn't have such things in her life. She hates boredom, and she is always searching for something to entertain her. And for that sake, she doesn't mind the methods.

This is a typical crime for pleasure: the real meaning of trouble maker. Like this, instead of a devil, it would be better to call her a small devil. I can see her black feathers waving on her back.

"Well, it will also be a part of your treatment."

Suzutski smiled like a true small devil.

"Give it your best, my 'fake' boyfriend. If you aren't careful, you might die from blood loss."

"Ye- yeah."

She peeked at me with upturned eyes, and I turned away.

Because this is unfair.

She is already pretty cute when she is in the classroom, but it doesn't compare to her face now. The smile she had just now… Was cute enough to make me think like that.

"But we have things to do until then."

I could hear the sound of a deep breath.

A sigh? That Suzutsuki is sighing?

"How can I convince Subaru about this? This is a bit troublesome. That girl will be against me leaving to have fun."

"……?"

I didn't understand the meaning of that girl's words.

Yeah, the me at that time wasn't able to understand it.

Her… Suzutsuki Kanade's melancholic reasons…

Chapter 4 – Paradise Summer

Part 1

Sunday.

The weather was good, just as we had wished for.

Well, even if it started to thunder or hail, it wouldn't matter to the place that we were going to today.

A waterproof leisure facility.

An indoor facility that had a great attractive power. It housed numerous pools and attractions completely inside of a greenhouse dome.

A tropical paradise created by humans.

No matter if it's spring or winter, it will be an endless summer inside.

An oasis built right in the middle of the city!

"…Nii-san. You are drooling too much."

After passing through the ticket gate of the last station before our destination, Kureha told me that with a shocked voice.

“I know that you are looking forward to it, but if you make this face, you will probably get scouted by the Russian Army Parachute troops.”

“I won’t. Besides, there’s no scout from the Russian army around here.”

While I said that, I touched my face for confirmation. Just like my little sister had pointed out, I felt myself drooling.

Well, there’s no helping it.

Because, it’s a date, you see?

Even though it’s a fake, it’s a date with a girlfriend during the holiday. Even though it’s to heal my gynophobia, it’s still a date. If you look only at Suzutsuki’s external appearance, she is quite a beautiful girl.

It’s normal for a high schooler to be high-strung. But for this to happen to me, who thought that I would never be able to experience such a thing thanks to my phobia, my tension is currently higher than Mount Fuji. If there was a record of my stress, it would surely be put in the Guinness Book of World Records. Ahahaha!

“Geez, did you get it? The aim of today’s date is for me and Konoe-senpai to get closer. I hope that you are willing to help with that.”

“I know that, I know.”

“I wonder if you are saying the truth.”

Kureha puffed out her cheeks as if she was in a bad mood.

“Ah, right. It looks like you talked to Suzutsuki through the phone yesterday night, what were you talking about?”

“What? That was obviously a strategy meeting.”

“……”

Why is she saying such an ominous thing?

My tension that was at the highest possible point suddenly dropped. Rather, since that event on the rooftop, the two of them have had such a good relationship. It was not at the level of a deepened relationship, but more to point that I started to feel really disgusted.

“To tell the truth, we already have a lot of preparations done.”

“Hah?”

“By the way, Nii-san, there’s also a trick prepared inside the bag, so you can’t open it carelessly.”

“Nyahaha,” my little sister laughed.

At mach speed, I opened the bag that was on my shoulder.

I was careless.

I thought that it could contain a plastic bomb.

“Ahaha! You can’t, Nii-san! There’s no meaning in that if you don’t open it in a place with Konoe-senpai!”

I searched inside the bag while ignoring the noisy Kureha. When I did that, I noticed an object that I didn’t remember putting inside the bag. What is that? Its size was just like of a magazine. Or rather, it was a magazine. When I pulled it out of the bag to take a better look at it…

An erotic magazine.

And moreover, it was one from my treasured hidden collection.

"Uwoooooo!!"

Immediately, I threw the object that I had in my hands into a nearby trash can.

"Uwa! This is cruel, Nii-san! I even went to the trouble of preparing it."

"Shut up! What kind of stuff are you putting into my bag?"

She went to my room and took it on her own. This is violation of privacy. My sister finding my porn magazines is so embarrassing that I want to die.

"Eeh. Then what would be good for you? The one with maids?"

"Stop! Don't just go spreading your big brother's tastes so easily."

"Even though I was planning to take the opportunity and scream [Look! My Nii-san is a pervert! Please look at this book! These are cat ears, cat ears, you see?] to Konoe-senpai."

"Do you want to bring an end to my life?"

"Uuh… I thought that with this, Konoe-senpai would understand that Nii-san liked women… I even worked so hard to think about it together with Onee-sama."

Kureha lowered her head, heartbroken.

…I was naïve. Now that I think about it, Kureha and Suzutsuki had joined forces. It would not be strange if nitro was produced from the chemical reaction of this combination.

“But don’t think this is over yet. I still have a lot of tricks.”

Kureha had a hot and evil fighting spirit burning inside her.

…Fearsome.

When I think about Kureha’s physical strength being combined with Suzutsuki’s brain power, I start to feel that I would go mad.

This seriously needs a countermeasure. To think that those two would make such a combination while I was spacing out. Even if I try to solve it with sarcasm, I won’t be able to compete with those two. It’s like trying to challenge a stealth bomber with a bamboo spear.

Then, let’s join forces here as well.

At least two against two will compensate for the one person lacking on my side.

After a few minutes of walking from the station, upon reaching the specified meeting place, I could see the backs of two girls looking at the entrance of the leisure land.

They were Konoe and Suzutsuki.

Looks like they were talking and hadn't noticed us.

Okay, mission start.

For the time being, let's start with an intimate greeting. To who? Konoe, of course. I don't expect her to side with me, but if I play dumb with her too, it will be three against one. This would be a situation that would make Suzutsuki glad… basically, it would be like facing hell.

I have to stop that, no matter what…!

"Yo, Konoe."

I made a sociable smile with all my might and tapped Konoe's shoulder from behind. I thought that receiving an answer like "Yo, Jirou. The weather is good today, isn't it?" would be good.

The moment I thought that.

"Mugu–!"

Suddenly something was shoved inside my mouth.

A black and solid metallic object. An exposed automatic.

–A handgun.

No matter how you looked at it, this was a violation of the Swords and Firearms Control Law.

"……."

Err… What is this? A model gun? Konoe must have been surprised, but more importantly, she has such a serious face…

"Don't move. If you move, I will fire mercilessly."

Konoe had her finger on the trigger and wore a serious face. She looked at my face with sharpened eyes, and as she recognized it, "fuu" she let out a sigh.

"Jirou, don't just go touching my back carelessly. I was about to shoot you full of holes."

She took her gun back as if nothing had happened. I wasn't able to move because of the shock and stood there like a fool with my mouth wide open.

“He— hey, Konoe-san.”

“Hm? What?”

“This, this is…”

“Aah, did you think it was small as well? I am also a bit uneasy with such a small gun. As expected, I should have brought one with more penetration power.”

“Wrong! What I am asking is how you got your hands on such a dangerous object!”

As I got up, I retorted with all my might.

After twirling the gun several times like in a western movie, she put the handgun back in her bag. Aah, right. As expected, there’s no way she would be carrying such an exorbitant thing like a…

“But since it’s been through a remodeling, if you hit some key points, it can kill people.”

“You are blatantly breaking the Swords and Firearms Control Law! Why are you carrying such a thing!?”

“What are you saying? The essential items for going outside are a cell phone, a handkerchief, and a handgun. This is common knowledge for a butler.”

“As I expected, this has nothing to do with butlers.”

This is common knowledge from what army? From the way she talked, it seemed as if she was walking in a warzone.

“Moreover, Jirou… Be careful.”

“Of what?”

“The enemy, you never know if he is around or not.”

“Enemy… You say…”

She took a glance around. Our surroundings in this leisure land were full of families and couples. It’s not like there was something strange about them. This was a heartwarming scene on a calm Sunday.

“If multiple armed enemies appear, I will have my hands full with protecting Ojou-sama. I feel sorry about it, but you will have to defend yourself.”

Subaru was looking alertly around our surroundings with eyes as sharp as a blade.

She spoke clearly. No matter how you looked, she did not have the face of someone who had come to the leisure land to play. She emanated a killing intent, just like a grenade without the pin.

"…Hey, Suzutsuki."

I spoke in a very low tone so as not to let Konoe hear us.

"What do you want, Jirou-kun?"

"Isn't she… A bit strange today?"

"Yeah. But it's always like this."

"Always?"

"Yes. Always, whenever just the two of us go out. She is very against me going to another place that is not the academy. She says that it's dangerous."

"…But that time, didn't you go alone to the Manga Café?"

At that time, Konoe had been together with me at the Game Center. Suzutsuki should have been alone at that moment.

“During that time, I had another servant with me. Basically, I am prohibited to go out alone. It had been decided like that…”

“Decided…”

I know I’ve heard this speech before.

Of course, it’s something her family decided. No matter how much you say that it is to protect Suzutsuki, isn’t this way of protecting her a bit strange? Killing every suspicious person that approaches.

“Well, leaving that aside, let’s have fun today. Since I finally managed to convince Subaru to come, if we don’t play it will be meaningless.”

Suzutsuki continued, trying to refocus the conversation.

“Isn’t that right, Kureha-chan? Hey, don’t be so nervous.”

“Ye— yeah, Onee-sama.”

She answered from behind me… Wait, isn’t she trembling a lot from nervousness?

“Ko, kokoko, Konoe-senpai. To… Today, well… I will be in your care.”

Uee, what a shock. Even though she used to perform lariats[1] on me while I was trying to rest, looking at her acting this way, even I thought she looked like a normal girl.

Like this, I can at least relax. I refreshed my heart with those words.

I feel bad for Kureha, but if she keeps being nervous like this, it will take a while until she can relax around Konoe. For the time being, I don't have to worry about them getting into that kind of relationship.

But I can't be careless.

After all, I am relying on Konoe, who is the most catastrophic. The situation was changing to the pattern I feared. Sarcasm wouldn't work on these three. This is the worst. I feel like I just witnessed the Day of Birth of King Ghidorah[2]. Help me, Godzilla.

"Then, let's get going? If we stay here forever, we will waste our time."

Suzutsuki led the way into the leisure land's remarkably wide lobby. They said it was a just a reopening, but the interior was completely new.

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[1] A lariat is a professional wrestling move similar to a clothesline, except that the wrestler moves, wraps his arm around the neck of the opponent, and forces the opponent to the ground.

[2] King Ghidorah is a kaiju, a fictional Japanese monster featured in several of Toho Studios' Godzilla films. It appears as an armless, three-headed dragon with large wings and two tails.

After passing through the entrance, we exchanged our tickets for one-day entry marks that were stamped onto our arms, and like that, we went to the changing rooms.

Of course, the changing rooms were separated for boys and girls, so the regrouping was going to be after leaving the changing rooms.

If I could just escape now, the paradise of midsummer would be waiting for me. When I think about this, my mood starts to brighten again; my mental circuits are so simple. To tell the truth, I've never disliked swimming. Rather, I love it. Aah, let's change quickly and go swimming.

When I tried to enter the dressing room, in high spirits—Suddenly, the cuff of my jacket was pulled.

When I looked back, Konoe was clinging to my jacket just like a young child clinging to his mother.

Is it just me, or was she blushing?

"Ji— Jirou…"

"? What? Did you forget something?"

"No, no… Err…"

I wonder why, but her ears were completely red and she was silent.

I wonder why. I was thinking that she could have been feeling unwell, but suddenly—I remembered something important.

Konoe. She is a girl.

"……"

I became speechless.

What… What do I do now?

Now that I remember, when we would change for Physical Education, Konoe was never in the class. I'm sure that during those times she would have hidden somewhere and changed, but here, there's no place to hide. If we keep going straight, we will just end up leaving this changing room.

"I got it. I will take the lead, and you close your eyes. Like this, you can enter, right?"

She just slightly nodded to my improvised plan.

Thus, we stepped into the evil territory.

Of course, the inside was full of naked males, a tremendously hard to describe scene. If you put it on TV even late at night, there would be complaints against it.

Like a guide dog, I navigated Konoe into a shower inside the changing room. At least with this, if we close the shower curtain, she won't be able to see what is happening outside. Making a changing room inside of the changing room, what a strange story.

But sadly, I won't peek. No, seriously. My life is pitiful as always.

After a few minutes, Konoe opened the curtain after she had finished changing. Of course, the swimsuit was not a girlish one, but an orange hoodie top and a pair of half pants above the knees.

I had also finished changing. The only thing left to do was to leave the baggage in the locker and exit in the same manner as we had entered.

I took Konoe's baggage for the sake of putting it in the locker, but it was unexpectedly heavy.

I wondered what was inside and took a little peek. There was the hand gun from before, a stun gun and cuffs… Even though I know it's for defensive use… If they found out that you brought such things to this place, they will surely mistake you for a terrorist.

"…Hmm?"

And.

For some reason, I felt an unpleasant sensation from the contents of Konoe's bag.

Well, from the start I already had such an unpleasant sensation… But how do I put it, I feel like it's lacking something. Even in the middle of so many self-defense tools, there was something essential missing…

"…So, okay."

When I muttered that, the little unpleasant sensation faded away. It shouldn't be a big thing. Even so, I think that an event where the contents of this bag will be necessary won't occur.

Konoe and I pushed our bags into the locker and were finally able to escape from the changing room. I somehow felt very tired.

"You are late."

Immediately after leaving the changing room, we heard Suzutsuki's voice.

"You weren't doing anything improper inside of the changing room, were you?"

“There’s no way. Even though we faced some tough situations.”

After saying that much, I was rendered speechless.

In front of my eyes was Suzutsuki in a swimsuit. A bikini. Colored black. I could say that it was just like I had imagined, but the destructive power was too high. A distinguished style. There’s volume in the right places, but her slender waist and thighs impressed me even more. What did she eat to become like this?

To her side was Kureha. For this one… I want to refrain from commenting. Well, it’s not like she is not cute. The swimsuit is a bright red bikini. But if I compare her to the monster to her side, I couldn’t help but look pitifully. Because the style is…

“Nii-sa~n. You were thinking dirty things just now, right?”

She was gazing fixatedly at me. She has good perception. I felt that if I commented clumsily, I would generate an event without even raising a flag, so I moved my vision to the pool.

Really, it’s enormous.

As expected from a weather-proof leisure facility.

The dome was a greenhouse and had a glass ceiling from where the sunlight poured in. There were a lot of pool types, from the ones with water slides to lazy rivers. There were even pools where waves flowed in to replicate the ocean. This is truly a tropical summer, a fully opened, southern country model.

Since it was not summer time yet, it was not crowded. It was the exact mood to have fun.

“Ah… Err, Konoe-senpai.”

Kureha talked to Konoe while fidgeting.

“This swimsuit fits you very well. Looks cool.”

“Aah. Yours is also cute.”

“Heh! N— no, such… Cute…”

She was blushing lightly from the shyness… I am somehow feeling complicated. How do I put it… Kureha really was a girl. I wanted her to be this feminine at our house too.

“Then… Would you like to swim with me? To tell the truth, I am not good at swimming… So I thought that you could teach me…”

Liar! Swimming is one of your strongest points! If I am not mistaken, you swam fifty meters easily while diving. Anyways, I don't know if Suzutsuki's hands are in the middle of this, but it's a good strategy.

"Well, I don't really mind…"

Konoe instantly glanced at Suzutsuki. Looks like she is bothered by the safety of her master.

"It's okay, Subaru. If it is needed, Jirou-kun will protect me, so don't bother with me and go."

"…Understood. If Ojou-sama says so."

The conversation ended before I could intervene. Err, what does she mean by "if it is needed"? Are there piranhas inhabiting these pools?

"I will leave it to you, Jirou. I believe in you."

Konoe emphasized that, and then walked towards the pool with Kureha.

Even if you tell me that… I am a bit happy that you say that you believe in me, but what am I protecting her from?

"Fufu, it's okay, you don't need to have such a troubled face. She is just being a bit nervous."

“A bit… that is a bit?”

It looked like she was protecting Suzutsuki from a kidnapping or something like it. It’s not like they received a crime notice from Lupin[3].

“It’s this place, after all…”

“Ha? What is this? Did you guys come here before?”

“Yes. Once, when we were children. But at that time, this place wasn’t so big.”

Suzutsuki closed her eyes a bit as she started reminiscing.

“This is so nostalgic. That time we had such big problems.”

“Big problems…? What? Were you really kidnapped?”

I said that with the intention of making a little joke, but for some reason Suzutsuki became silent.

---

3 Lupin the Third is a guy who is the grandson of the greatest thief in history. For more information http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lupin_III%E2%80%9D.

……

Hey, what's with that silence?

It is making me think that she really was kidnapped here once.

"Yeah. When we were kids, Subaru and I were kidnapped here."

"…Heh?"

I thought that it was one of her lies, but it looked like this time was different. The proof was that Suzutsuki's face had the most serious expression I'd seen until now.

"I wonder how many years ago it was. We were playing here, and we were thoughtlessly kidnapped."

"Thoughtlessly, why such…?"

"Apparently their aim was the ransom, but the problem itself was solved quickly. All the criminals were caught, and the two of us were released without harm. But even though it was for a short period, it doesn't change the fact that we were kidnapped. That incident was the reason that I am restricted from leaving home.

"Then, the reason that Konoe was so nervous was…"

“I’m sure that she is remembering the past experience here. And what’s more, after that event, Subaru suddenly changed.”

“Changed?”

What’s with that? Wasn’t the event solved without problems?

“Subaru probably feels responsible for that incident. The fact that I was kidnapped was her own — fault. She couldn’t protect her master as a butler should—Something like that.”

“This is unreasonable.”

No, we are talking about that Konoe, who is so proud of being Suzutsuki’s butler. I’m sure that watching Suzutsuki being kidnapped in front of her eyes must have been a shock for her.

“After that event, the relationship between me and Subaru has been awkward. You saw how we act at the academy. Even at home, it’s always like that. She might still be carrying some of that burden. I think that’s why she still doesn’t want to talk much with me.”

“…….”

“But I want to be on good terms with her, like we were a long time ago.”

Now that Suzutsuki mentioned it, a long time ago, Konoe used to call her [Kana-chan]. Looking at them normally you wouldn't notice it, but before the incident, they had an even better relationship than now.

That way, they looked like real friends.

"Don't tell me that you brought Konoe here today because you wanted her to remember the past."

"Fufu, I wonder about that. But—"

'This isn't something so simple,' Suzutsuki murmured as if she were clenching her teeth.

"Jirou-kun. Just like you have a weakness in your gynophobia, Subaru also has her own weakness. A deadly weakness that she carries along with being my butler."

"Deadly…?"

Now that I remember, she said before that Konoe's cooking was fatal… But this has nothing to do with that. No matter how bad you are at cooking, it has nothing to do with protecting Suzutsuki.

"If we can overcome that, surely we will be able to give Subaru some room. And then, maybe she can revert to her previous self? Be on good terms with me, like in the past."

"…Suzutsuki."

"Okay. Then let's finish this conversation here. We came here to swim, didn't we? Our time is limited."

Walking towards the pool, she reverted back to the usual Suzutsuki.

"Come on, don't just stand there dumbfounded! You are my lover now, aren't you?"

Suzutsuki naturally wrapped her arms around my own… Heh, gyaaa! Her breasts! I felt an elastic and soft weapon touching close to my upper arm.

"Are you okay? Your face suddenly turned a bright blue…"

Suzutsuki asked that while hugging my arms tightly.

…Fearsome.

This girl is enjoying watching me suffer from the bottom of her heart …

"Don't make such a scary face. I will tell you this- that this is only the start. If we don't take such drastic measures, your phobia won't be healed. "

Suzutsuki was pushing my body while smiling.

I should have checked the location of the medical office.

Regretting that with all my might, I matched pace with my fake lover.

Part 2

My fingers swelled up from swimming in the morning, and it turned out that we were going to play on the attractions in the afternoon.

Well, I prefer it this way. Because in the morning, the number of nosebleeds I had was in the double digits. Suzutsuki is fearsome. I wonder if she is a vampire or something if she wants to see my blood that badly.

Even though inside this dome there were lots of attractions, according to Suzutsuki, the first place to go was the haunted mansion. Apparently, you can enter dressed in a swimsuit, so after eating lunch, the four of us would be going there…

“What is this…?”

I was just astonished.

[The silent sheep and her happy friends]

Such a thing was written in blood-red letters on the sign of the haunted mansion that was in front of my eyes now.

“Heh, do you know it?”

“No, it doesn’t matter whether I know or not…”

Silent Sheep.

I never thought it would appear again in such a place, even though I had wanted to never encounter it again. I even thought that the event that happened before at the game center was a curse of this guy.

Various illustrations of cute deformed sheep were painted on the building façade. As expected, all their mouths were red. Or rather, what's going on with this slogan? [The Current Fashion: Scary and Cute! Your Heart Will Also Have a Heart Attack!] Rather, this is unlucky. It wouldn't be strange if a lawsuit happened.

"Hey… Don't you want to stop?"

"Why? Don't tell me you are bad with scary things?"

"It's not that, but…"

I just can't like this character. Rather than surrealist, it was more ominous, especially considering the title. I don't think it's possible for this thing to have happy friends.

"Uuh, I am also kind of bad with this…"

Kureha was clinging to Suzutsuki, her face completely blue. Now that I remember, since a long time ago she used to be bad with occult related

things. ‘I don’t feel like I can win against someone who doesn’t have a body’. If I said that this was a phrase that suited her, I would be right.

“But… Konoe-senpai is going to enter…”

“……”

I looked to my side while having a bad premonition. As usual, Konoe was gazing at the ominous sheep with a warm look. Uwaa, she sure became a fan of this stuff.

Since there was no helping it, we let Konoe wait in line first.

Perhaps so as not to be bored while waiting in line, you can see what is happening at the exit from here. The plan is to have fun while watching the reactions from the people that are leaving.

But the clients that were leaving the mansion kept screaming errant things like “Hiyaaa! I will be cursed!” or “Help me! They don’t want to leave my head!” or “Coming! They are coming! Hiyaaaa! You all can’t!!!”

There was even a little girl who had fainted that came out on a stretcher with her eyes completely white. There was a warning written, ‘People with weak hearts, please be cautious`, this is surely scary.

“Uwaaaa!” Kureha was clinging to Suzutsuki and trembling a lot. This is sure. There are even clients that leave the line with their physical conditions destroyed.

“Kureha-chan, isn’t it better for us to stop here?”

Suzutsuki whispered to Kureha, ‘Your face has already surpassed pale, and is now the color of the earth.’ Un, I agree. I feel like if she entered, she wouldn’t be able to come out again.

“How about we leave the line? I’ll go together with you. That’s why, Jirou-kun, you can go have fun with Subaru.”

“Yosh, gotcha! …Err, hey! I really have to enter!?”

“What? You are a guy, you can bear it. Or are you such a chicken that you are scared of things of this level?”

“Kuh… You…!

“If I am wrong, then go. We will wait in that shop where we just had lunch.”

Saying that quickly, she took Kureha’s hand and easily left the line.

Uuh, since it came to this, I have to decide. I feel like if I enter, I will probably have nightmares for three days, but I can't stand being called something so low as a chicken. Even I have pride.

But.

Suddenly, one of the attendants of the attraction said over the loudspeaker that the attraction was going to stop operating.

Looks like a young couple disappeared inside of the attraction and now the staff is working together to search for them. This looks like the development of a B class horror movie. Don't tell me they were eaten?

"Just a bit more and we could have entered."

Konoe was heavily regretful, but I was sincerely relieved. Looks like the clients around me had the same sentiments and left the line without any objections.

We also left the line and went to meet with Suzutsuki.

"By the way, how was this morning? You were with Kureha the whole time, right?"

While walking towards the shop where we had eaten lunch, I talked to Konoe who was by my side. It was bothering me. I don't think the relationship

between Konoe and Kureha will grow too quickly, but there's always a thing called 'chance'.

"Aah, it was fun. It has been a long time since the last time I played with a girl."

Konoe was making a happy face.

"She… Kureha-chan is a bright and good girl. You also have a good relationship with her, right?"

"Somewhat… If you just put aside the fact that she uses me as a sandbag every morning, the answer is yes."

"…I am jealous. Because I don't have such a good relationship with my family."

Suddenly, a shadow fell over her face.

Maybe she is having a fight with her family?

"To tell the truth, yesterday, I fought with my father."

"Is that so? But I don't really think that your dad wanted to fight with you, right? He should have his reasons."

Even though there are parents that punish their sons without reasons. And also little sisters.

“But I sincerely don’t know why he was so mad at that time. He even said that he would cut into pieces…”

“That is… Fearsome…”

Or rather, isn’t this dangerous? “Cut into pieces.” In my household, this was a phrase used as frequently as “Let’s eat”, but in a normal family this was not frequently used.

“I don’t understand, why Father acts like this when it comes to Jirou…”

“…Eh?”

“Bring that glasses boy to my front yard! I will cut him into pieces and hang them in the air!” He screamed things like that in a loud voice, but for the safety of your body I want to make peace with him soon.”

“Wa, wait a bit! Why is your father so enraged at me?”

I don’t understand anything here. What did I do?

“I don’t know, either. Even though I only told him about the first time I met you.”

“The first time we met?”

“I just told him that on the first day we met, you pushed me down in an empty classroom, touched my breasts, and had a nosebleed.”

“Of course he will misinterpret this!”

It is clear that he will go mad and crazy. From now on, I need to be sure that I don’t meet Konoe’s father no matter what. I don’t know whether I will be arrested by the cops or be hit by a car for being the criminal that harmed his daughter.

While chatting, we approached the wave pool.

This pool reproduced the ocean, and the bottom of it had sand; it was a structure that I could not believe. We were supposed to meet with Suzutsuki and Kureha after passing this pool.

“Hey, Jirou. Isn’t that a person?”

Suddenly, Konoe pointed to the pool side.

When I looked, far to the inside of the wave pool, there was a small figure sinking… Er, hey!

No matter how you looked, that was drowning.

“Bi- big problems! We have to call a staff member, fast!”

That said, Konoe started looking around for a staff member, but she couldn’t find one. It was such a big facility; so unfortunately, the area may be in a blind spot of the monitoring system. And to make it worse, the drowning person looked to be a small child.

“Konoe! Please, go search and bring a staff member here!”

Saying that, I removed my glasses and threw them into the zipper pocket of the swimsuit. The distance was about 30 meters. I think that I can go that far!

“Wait, Jirou! If we are going to save him, then I’ll g—”

I jumped in the pool before she finished her words.

Crawling, I pushed the water aside and proceeded with all my might.

I might not look like it, but I have confidence in my swimming skills. When I was a kid, I fell from a five meter bridge in the middle of winter while playing with Kureha, and I managed to come back alive and safe. Sometimes the waves bother me, but this much won’t be an obstacle.

“Hey, are you okay!?”

I screamed that while hugging the body of the drowning child. There was a kickboard floating nearby. It's good that I could do this much using the kickboard, but I may have left a chance go. Fortunately, with my height I could reach the bottom. I will keep carrying like this until I reach the pool side…

"…Heh, are?"

The moment I tried to go back to the land—I perceived the disaster.

The water around me was dyed red.

"Wha…"

After two seconds, dumbfounded, I realized the reason.

Nosebleed.

The fresh blood spurting from my nose was dying the pool red.

"……."

After becoming speechless, I fearfully checked on the child that I was carrying.

When I did that… For the worse, the child I was hugging was a girl in a school swimsuit. She looked to be in the lower grades of primary school.

“He, help me!”

Maybe it was out of panic, but the girl clung to my neck. A soft sensation. Undoubtedly, this was the soft sensation of a girl’s skin…

“Guhaa!”

I barely saved my consciousness that was about to fly away.

Damn… what a thing.

She is a primary schooler! A primary schooler dressed in a school swimsuit! Damn! To react to such a little girl… How much of a chicken am I?

“—Gu, uuuu!”

I desperately headed back to the pool side with my vision blurred.

This is dangerous.

My blood won’t stop. It is looking like the movies where the sharks appear in the pool.

I shouldn't have eaten so much spinach and liver yesterday night!

I thought that would prepare a counter-attack for today, but it looks like it was having the opposite effect.

Faster and faster, my feet kept losing strength.

My body started to sink gradually in the water, and my vision was becoming faint.

"Jirou!"

I had the feeling that I heard my voice being called.

A silhouette was reflected in my blurry vision.

The moment I realized who it was—I lost consciousness.

Part 3

“Hey, Kinjirou. What do you think about your name?”

A hospital room filled with the smell of chemicals.

Lying under the bed sheets, my old man said that to the young me.

Father’s face was very thin.

Ever since he was born, his body… especially his heart, has been weak. He somehow managed to live, deceiving death again and again, but five years after I was born finally came the moment when the doctor told him that he wouldn’t be able to continue living without a surgery.

The chance of success for the surgery was 50%.

Half a chance to live and half a chance to die.

That day was the day that the surgery of fate was going to happen. Even though it could be the last conversation between father and son, my old man calmly asked that.

“Uncool.”

“Idiot. Don’t go saying that the name I gave you is uncool.”

He lightly beat my head. It didn’t hurt, of course. Being hit by such a thin arm wouldn’t hurt. But still I lowered my head and moaned, “It hurts”. Somehow, I felt that I should do that.

Dad grinned.

Somehow proud.

“Listen, your name has a deep meaning behind it. It is not just an old fashioned name.”

“…But it sure feels old.”

“Well, just shut up and listen. Do you know the meaning of ‘stand by me’?”

The still-young me answered “A relative from a gasoline stand?”[1] Dad laughed so hard that he had problems breathing, even though he could be dying soon.

“Wrong. ‘Stand by me’ means something like, ‘I want you to be by my side’”.

[1] Stand by me in Japanese is スタンド・バイ・ミー or sutando bai mi. But as a child, Kinjirou had no idea what it meant so he came up with the only thing he could think of: relative from a gasoline stand, read as ガソリンスタンドの親戚 or gasorin sutando no shinseki.

"Soba?"[2]

"Not this kind of soba. More like 'stay close to me.' How is it? Romantic, right?"

"… I don't understand."

"Haha. Well, this was expected. The hurdle is a bit too high for a five year old kid."

Of course.

It is a bit unreasonable to ask that to a kid who doesn't even know how to write his name correctly.

I am sure that Dad also knew that.

But—Even so, Dad continued the conversation seriously.

"Here, Kinjirou. The kanji in your name means [close][3]. The main point is, I want you to become a man that can say 'stand by me' to someone."

---

[2] He is talking about this http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soba%E2%80%9D.

[3] Kinjirou is written as 近次郎, where 近 means close, 次 means next, and 郎 means son, children etc.

“Someone?”

“Yeah, someone. And I’m sure that this someone will be a very important person to you. Your mom, Kureha, and someone that you really care about. Be a man that can say ‘stand by me’ to these people. This meaning is inserted into your name. Isn’t it cool?”

“Hmmm… a little bit.”

For some reason, Dad was laughing with a funny face.

“Become strong, Kinjirou. I’m sure that being my and your mother’s son, you will become strong. Become strong and protect the important people by your side. This is a promise. ‘Stand by me’. This is a promise between me and you—Between Sakamachi Jirou and Sakamachi Kinjirou.”

“…Hmm, I got it.”

In truth, I didn’t understand anything, but for the time being I nodded.

Maybe because at that time my dream was to become a superhero, I just wanted to become strong, or maybe I just tried to understand Dad’s words desperately.

Aah—But Dad.

But it's troubling, I still don't understand it very well.

Stand by me.

The meaning of these words that you left behind in your final moments.

Why did you have tell me that no matter what…?

Part 4

Suddenly, I opened my eyes.

I felt like I was having an old dream.

I almost closed my eyes because of the bright light shining into them, but then I saw the glass sky in my vision.

It seemed like I was lying on a bench next to the pool.

“I am glad. You finally awoke.”

An alto voice echoed from above me.

Aah, I see, I jumped into the pool for the sake of saving a kid that was drowning and… Uwaa, I don’t want to think about it. It’s shameful, but I fainted because of a little girl hugging me. According to my watch, I had fainted for more than ten minutes.

“Are you okay, Jirou?”

“Aah, I just had a reencounter with my dead father.”

I said that while putting my glasses back on, and Konoe wrinkled her brow.

“I beg of you. Please stop with this kind of joke. I was very worried because I thought that you could have drowned. And besides…”

“Besides…?”

“…N- nothing. Just forget it.”

For some reason, she pressed her lips with her finger and became silent, wearing a bright red face. Don’t tell me you did something while I was sleeping. You didn’t write funny things on my face, did you?

While I was checking my face with my hands, the parents of the child from before came to thank me.

Uwaa, I’m feeling so embarrassed.

This was the first time that an adult came to thank me. But in the end, the one who saved us was Konoe. If you separated it, I was on the side of the ones that were saved.

“Aah, how shameful. I was sure that I was going to save her, but in the end I didn’t do anything.”

I murmured that while looking at the girl walking while holding hands with her parents.

“It’s not like that. You made it properly to a shallow place. Even if I had not been there, that girl would have been saved.”

“I see.”

“Aaah, and you truly did a good job reaching that place. Even though that girl was hugging you so tightly.”

“…Yeah, somehow.”

Well, if I fainted there I think my actions would have been misinterpreted.

High schooler- Went to save primary school girl, had nosebleed and drowned. That news article flowed through my brain. Even if you were in puberty, this way of dying would be too embarrassing. It would certainly enter the hall of fame as one of the strangest deaths in the world.

“But that was splendid. Even while being hugged by a little girl and having a nosebleed, you managed to save her life. See, incredibly splendid.”

“Hey… I beg you, please stop saying things that can be easily misinterpreted. If you put it like that, people will think that I am a pedophile.”

“…Eh? Is that wrong?”

“Heeeh- what is with this reaction!? Why are you surprised that I am not a pedophile!?”

Or rather, I am the one that should be surprised. I will say this straight, I don’t have these kinds of tastes.

“Heeh? But you, while completely naked, watch the kids going to the nearby primary school, don’t you?”

“Why are you affirming that!? Don’t say such shameless things so easily!”

“But isn’t it true that every night you keep saying [Ha ha, Kureha-tan, let’s take a shower together and wash each other’s back] while sleeping?

“What’s with this scary sleep talk!? What kind of bizarre dream am I having!?”

“[Please, help me! Nii-san… won’t stop smelling my socks!] She said that to me while crying…”

“…I see. Don’t meet with Kureha for the time being. I will discipline her properly.”

“Discipline… So you really are going to torture her.”

“I won’t!”

“But you forcefully put a dog collar with a chain on her neck, right?”

“I won’t do that. I don’t commit this kind of domestic violence.”

“…Fufu, what are you saying? You are going to put it on her.”

“Why am I?”

“That’s because we are talking about Jirou…”

“Stop saying that! It was her! This is all her fault!?”

That damn little sister… Does she want to make me look like a degenerated pervert that badly? And Suzutsuki is also in on this. This is an insidious trick that may have come from her mind.

“That’s okay. I am well aware that Jirou is not this kind of person.”

“Then it is fine, but…”

“Then relax and proudly puff out your chest! Silver Killer!”

“Please just stop with this bullshit already!”

Ha ha, I was breathing hard. I was on the verge of hyperventilating. Having difficulty breathing after retorting, I couldn't stand, even if it was bad joke.

Looking at my face, Konoe laughed.

"Fufu, this is funny. It has been a long time since the last time I had this kind of conversation."

"I see… This is good…"

All told.

As we talked while walking, before we realized it, we had reached the table in front of the shop where we ate lunch this noon.

But.

"…Heh?"

For some reason, we couldn't find Suzutsuki and Kureha.

This is strange. We told them to wait for us here. Maybe they just went to the bathroom.

"Crap."

The butler murmured from my side.

“What a failure. For me to be away from Ojou-sama for such a long time…”

Her face was going blue, even though there was nothing to worry about because my little sister is together with Suzutsuki. If it’s about fighting power, she is like a war dog.

I thought that they were just playing around—when suddenly, a voice was heard.

It was the granny from the shop.

“Hmm, are you perhaps Sakamachi-san?”

“…? Yeah, I am…”

“I am glad. I am taking care of something that is the property of your friends.”

“Eh?”

I was completely puzzled, and then the granny handed me a black cell phone.

This was a model I had never seen before. I wonder if it is Suzutsuki's. But did she bring a cell phone with her?

"No, Ojou-sama's cell phone is different."

"For real? Then, who is the owner of this cell phone?"

And the moment I said that.

Suddenly, a robotic ringtone sounded from the cell-phone.

It was an incoming call. Or rather, it was a video call. There was a non-notification setting showing on the liquid crystal screen.

"Let's hang up." But Konoe pressed the call button.

When she did that—A strange image appeared on the screen.

A dog… No, a wolf.

On the other side of the radio waves was a person wearing a black suit, and for some reason he was covering his face with a wolf mask.

And what an elaborate mask. A delicately made accessory like the ones used in the movies, and the expression was so brutal that it gave me creepy sensations. It was just like a wolf man that appears in gothic horror…

“Aa, aa, hello, hello? Can you hear me?”

A voice came out of the speaker. He was using a voice changer, so you couldn’t even tell whether he was a man or a woman.

“We can hear you. Who are you?”

Konoe asked that with a sharp voice.

And in response to that, the wolf laughed.

“Hiyahahaha! So, you are unexpectedly calm. Even though your important master has disappeared. Right? Konoe Subaru.”

With a very twisted voice, the wolf spoke Konoe’s name as if to mock her.

Hey, wait…

How does this guy know that Suzutsuki is not here?

“I will ask you once more. Who are you?”

Somehow keeping her calm, Konoe asked that once again.

“Aah, okay, let’s answer that, let’s really answer that. I will only say this once, so listen well, Butler-kun. I am, I am…”

Kidnapper.

Once again.

On the other side of the screen, the wolf released a harsh loud laughter.

I could not help but to think that this was the start of something.

Chapter 5 – The Wolf and the Sheep

Part 1

“Kidnapper, you say…”

“Aah, yeah, Jirou-kun. I kidnapped your little sister and your classmate.”

The image on the screen changed.

A somewhat dark indoor space.

And reflected there, lying side by side were Suzutsuki and–

“Kureha!”

The two of them didn’t move, as if they were dead.

Were they unconscious? Or were they…

“It’s okay. They are just in a deep sleep. I told you, right? That I am a kidnapper. Not a murderer.”

Then the screen once again showed the wolf.

“Well, that doesn’t mean that things will stay that way…”

“You bastard!”

“Calm down, Jirou. Don’t fall for his provocation.”

“…-!”

Don’t ask of me the impossible. How can I keep calm while my little sister has been kidnapped!?

“Tell me, kidnapper. What is your objective?”

“Hyuu~ As expected from the Butler-kun. You are so calm. Or are you unexpectedly cold? Don’t you care about what could happen to your master?”

“Shut up! Try laying your fingers on any of them. I will cut your fingers off without leaving a single trace of them.”

Konoe balled her fists tightly. I am not the only one that can’t be calm. I don’t think that what she said just now was a joke.

“Uuh–, so scary~. If you do that, I will never be able to play rock-paper-scissors again. Then, how about deciding this through rock-paper-scissors? If you win, I’ll set the two of them free. But if I win, I’ll kill the–.”

“I told you to shut up. You didn’t kidnap Ojou-sama just to have this weird conversation, did you? What is your aim… no, what is your request?”

“Hyahaha. What I want? What I want, huh? Is it okay? Then I will say it. I only have one request. Why don’t we just get along and play together?”

… he is taking us lightly.

I became convinced of that.

This bastard. He is definitely not sane.

“Come to the attraction that is in the middle of construction in less than ten minutes. This is where the game will take place. And of course, if you call the police, the game will end immediately, so take care. Also, don’t try bringing those dangerous tools that you brought in your bag, or it’ll raise a death flag.”

“…! Why… How…”

I caught my breath. How did this guy know the contents of Konoe’s bag?

“How, you ask? It is very simple, Jirou-kun. I was tailing you guys the entire time. Ever since before you even entered this place.”

The wolf said, “This is the so-called ‘planned crime’” while laughing.

“This took so long. I had been waiting for this moment for a long time. For the chance to take revenge on this Butler-kun. This time, I won’t fail.”

–This time, I won’t fail.

Don’t tell me… That this guy was one of the kidnappers that Suzutsuki mentioned before? She said that all of them were arrested, but could there have been one that escaped?

“I understand. So, I should go there alone, right?”

“–?! Ei, hey, Konoe!”

I screamed without thinking.

“Don’t be a fool! This is clearly a trap! And also, Kureha is there too, we should go toget–.”

“Jirou. I am responsible for things turning out like this. I will save Kureha-chan, no matter what. So please, let me go alone… And besides…”

I can’t let Jirou do something this dangerous.

Konoe said that clearly.

…Don’t mess with me.

Are you telling me to just shut up and wait?

Without doing anything, only praying to God or something?

Even though my little sister—An important person is in danger…

“Hyahaha! What a good youth, what a good friendship. I don’t care about which one of you will come. No matter whether it is Jirou-kun that comes, or even the Butler-kun, the subject of the game won’t change. But—”

But do you think you can reach here, Konoe Subaru?

Saying that, the wolf took a silver and shiny object from his pocket.

A knife.

The blade was about twenty centimeters in length, and the design seemed evil.

That moment—Konoe’s face was dyed in surprise.

“Y, you…!”

“Un? What, this isn’t strange, is it? I investigated a lot about you. Enough to even have counter-measures prepared.”

“……!”

With a speech that seemed like a challenge, the wolf cut the call.

But Konoe was still holding the cell phone tightly.

And somehow, her fingers seemed to be trembling a bit.

“Konoe…?”

I called that name uneasily.

But there was no response.

Instead—

“Hey, hey.”

Like a puppet with its strings cut, Konoe fell while trembling.

Before her body reached the ground, I somehow managed to hold her with both of my arms.

“Ah, Jirou…”

Her lips became blue and were moving weakly.

“Do… Don’t worry! I was… I was just a bit surprised.”

She managed to say that with a shaky voice with all her might and somehow managed to get up.

But no matter how you looked at her, she was not normal.

Konoe lacked so much strength that she was about to fall again.

The color of her face made it seem like she was about to faint.

…What is this all about?

It’s as if she is just like me.

Gynophobia.

She is not having a nosebleed, but the symptoms that she is showing are the same as those of my phobia.

Yeah, just after she saw the knife that the wolf held, it started…

"……!"

Dokun My heart shook.

I see… Suzutsuki had said that.

Weak point.

That Konoe had a weak point that was just like my gynophobia.

Despite the fact that she was a butler, she had a mortal weak point.

The condition of Konoe now.

A condition similar to my phobia.

Don't tell me, this is…

"Konoe, don't tell me that you're afraid of—blades."

I voiced the conclusion that I reached.

Now that I think about it… Since before, there was something strange.

[That cooking was mortal to her]

I'm certain Konoe said that to me before.

Not that she was bad at it, but that she couldn't.

Why?

Why did you have to say it like that?

Maybe rather than being unable to do it, you just can't use it.

A kitchen knife—in other words, blades.

And that discomfort that I had felt in the changing room.

The contents of Konoe's bag. In the middle of all those self-defense tools, there was only one thing that was not inside.

Yes, a blade.

Even though there were remodeled gas guns and stun guns, the only kind of weapon that she didn't have was blades.

Not even a little knife…

From that, I based my conclusion.

In other words, Konoe Subaru is—

"…Exactly as you thought, I have a fear of blades."

A heavy tone of voice that was like a person confessing her own sins.

As expected, she has a fear of blades.

This is Konoe's weak point that Suzutsuki mentioned before.

Then, the reason is…

"Something happened the time you were kidnapped here, right? And that was the trigger for your having a fear of blades."

This is only a guess, but I think that they were threatened with a knife that time. That became a trauma, and after that she always…

“Aaah, this is a shameful topic. After that incident, I started to fear blades. Just from touching… No, just from looking at a blade, my body will lose its strength.

Konoe trembled while saying that.

Trauma.

Which brought about a phobia.

I know that feeling very well.

Even if you will it, your body won’t listen to you.

Since I have the same kind of phobia, I understand Konoe’s feelings so well that it hurts.

“……”

Wait…

Don’t tell me that she agreed to help cure my phobia because she has the same kind of problem herself?

She helped me only because I had the same kind of problem…

“I’m sorry, Jirou. I am fine, really…”

After releasing my hands, she stood up with trembling feet.

…Is she an idiot?

What in all this is fine?

“JIrou… I am a failure as a butler.”

“……”

“Not only am I not a guy, but more than that I have fear of blades… It would be strange for me, who can’t even protect her master well, to be serving Ojou-sama as her butler.”

Konoe was trying to walk, even though she was about to fall.

Sheep.

It’s just like a sheep.

A little sheep that was attacked by a hungry wolf.

Even while trembling from the cruel fangs and trying to avoid them.

Only earnestly trying to save her master…

“—Konoe.”

I said lightly to that small back.

“Be at ease, Jirou. I will save your sister no matter what. So please, wait here.”

And.

Konoe, who said that, became silent.

In other words, she was silenced.

With my right fist—I thrust into her stomach.

“Ji-Jirou…”

After receiving my strong fist, Konoe’s face filled with agony.

Those clear pupils gazed at me, full of questions.

“Sorry, Konoe. This is not a butler ticket, but afterwards I will listen to anything that you want to say. That’s why I want you to sleep for a while now.”

One more blow—Clearly meant to cut off her consciousness.

This was something that Mom taught me a very long time ago, but I am glad that it went well.

Konoe silently lost consciousness.

I left her body sleeping at the bank of the pool side.

…I wonder why.

“Stand by me… huh?”

Somehow, I felt that I heard Dad’s words.

The reason was only that. I have the same feeling as when I saved Konoe in the science room, and the same feeling as when I jumped in the pool just now.

–I have to protect them no matter what.

Somehow, I thought this.

This is what they call unexpected crime.

“Aah, I really don’t understand it…”

I said that to the blue sky over the glass.

–Then.

Now—Let’s meet with a kidnapper.

♀x♂

Part 2

After passing through the ‘keep out’ sign, I stepped inside of the indicated building.

The attraction under construction.

The plan was to begin operating it in the summer, so you could see equipment and construction materials inside. I walked through a dark hallway that only had the emergency light shining, and in no time I reached a dreary room that was about the size of a classroom.

A room full of darkness.

There were no windows in the room– only a small light shone between me and him…

“So—Welcome to my attraction. I was waiting for you, Jirou-kun. Even though I didn’t think you would really come.”

A black suit and a wolf mask.

The one standing there was, of course, the one on the other side of the call just now… The one who had kidnapped Kureha and Suzutsuki.

Uneasiness and impatience.

These two feelings were mixing inside my chest.

I looked around a bit. I couldn't see Suzutsuki and Kureha.

"No need to worry. The two of them are behind that door. Aah, and the way you acted just now was cool, like a protagonist of a manga."

The wolf was laughing.

From where was he watching? Granted, I had already presumed that he would be watching us.

"Hey, why did you do that? Even though there was the option of both of you coming."

He said, intrigued, in a machine-like voice.

…How would I know?

Is what I wanted to ask.

I also believe that it would have been better for both of us to come, and I also believe that instead of me, Konoe should have come.

But—This is the only thing I don't want. I can't let Konoe face danger.

And—

“I think it’s because you make me sick.”

I felt like a black sensation was burning into my heart.

I could not forgive this merciless asshole.

This man, who had kidnapped Kureha and Suzutsuki. This man, who had made Konoe call herself a failure…

I will never forgive him.

“I see. Well, your coming here doesn’t change the contents of the game, so be at ease.”

–You just have to win a fight against me.

‘Just that,’ the wolf laughed.

“You mean that we will have to exchange punches?”

I see. This is clearly easy to grasp. Many times easier than a mathematics question. I was so nervous thinking that the game could be something psychological.

“If you win, the two of them will go free; if you lose, I will confine you together with them, then make you three wait until the Butler-kun comes.”

“……”

If he wins, then he will pretend to wait for Konoe?

As I thought, his aim is Konoe.

He isn’t even looking at me, who is right in front of him.

But if the rules are just as he said, I also have a chance of winning.

I was born into ‘that’ family, after all. I’m not at Kureha’s level, but I also have some combat abilities, even though my mom forcefully made me learn them.

Besides, after doing that, I can’t afford to lose here.

I have the responsibility to not lose.

I will win and rescue Kureha and Suzutsuki—

“Aah—And just one more thing. I will say the most important thing now.”

The wolf pointed his finger and said.

“—Just don’t die.”

That was the starting signal.

To my surprise, the wolf reduced to zero the distance of five meters between us with one step.

“!!”

He’s fast.

His speed is… even more so, the movements of his attacks.

A black arm swung out.

A right straight.

I can’t avoid it.

The moment I thought that, a hard fist pierced my body.

“Guh!”

I was sent flying from the blow.

Reflexively, I guarded with both my arms. Even so, my line of vision blurred.

…This is bad.

Even though I was only punched, this power is…

This is at the same level as Kureha’s elbow drop.

Strong.

I don’t want to believe it, but this guy is as strong as Mom…!

“—Don’t get carried away, you damn brat!”

A deep, burly voice. For a moment, I had the feeling that I heard a voice different from the one that I heard just now, but I couldn’t afford to think about it.

“Guuh–!?”

A piercing body blow. With my stomach pierced, the strong pain made my breath stop. I was about to fall on my knees, but somehow managed to step up and bear it.

Yeah…

I can't fall yet.

"Heh, you are tough. To think that you can receive this blow and still be able to stand."

The same frivolous tone of voice as from the start.

I laughed as if to answer it.

"Ha, haha. That's right. I didn't receive such an enviable education—that would let me fall with this level of pain!"

I punched back at the wolf's stomach while saying that.

A piercing right fist.

At that moment, I released an attack with my entire body.

But—

“Hyahahaha.”

A machine-like laugh.

…This has to be a lie.

He didn’t even move an inch.

Don’t tell me that it didn’t work at all.

“Giih!”

In response, his left fist flew, and my ribs creaked.

Next, a knee kick.

A splendid combination.

A piercing shock ran through my back.

“Jirou-kun, I am sorry, but if you want to continue I will have to change the name of the game.”

The wolf said that calmly to me, who was trembling in anguish.

“The new name of the game will be ‘Biohazard’. And of course, the one who’ll fight the shitty blood-dyed zombie will be me.”

At that moment, an uppercut.

I lifted my body, before receiving his knee to my cheek.

This is bad… I am feeling weak.

My vision was distorted, as if I was wearing glasses with the wrong prescription. That attack just now made my chest shake.

I have no other option but to defend—

“…Guh!”

My body trembled from the blow. I was beaten again somewhere. My mouth only tasted of blood. My whole body was hurt, my eyes were dizzy, and I even spat blood. I lost all my power, and my knees fell to the ground.

“Guha!”

A merciless kick to my face as I fell forward. A Serie A-level free-kick.[1] If my head were a soccer ball, it would easily rip through the goal net.

The moment I fell on my back, my stomach was immediately stomped on.

Like he was stepping countless times on a cockroach that had appeared in the kitchen…

"……"

This hurts.

My internal organs were leaving my mouth like gelidium jelly strips.

I will be killed.

The blood coming from my eyelids blurred my vision red.

My body is already completely wounded.

If I don't pay attention, I will faint in no time.

---

[1] This is a reference to soccer. Serie A is a top level, Italian soccer tournament. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serie_A.

If I rise again, I really will be killed.

But—

“Ku, haha!”

The moment he stopped stomping on me, a dry laugh came from my mouth.

“This… This is nothing. If you compare this to our family reunions, this becomes like a picnic under the blue sky.”

With only my willpower, my lips moved and my body rose again. My face was completely covered with blood. Aah, there’s a crack in my glasses. I’ll have to buy another pair.

“…guh!”

Like he was waiting for me to stand up, the attack started once again.

My body fell into a violent pain. He fired a barrage of attacks. A one sided assault.

I can’t even… stay up anymore…

I’m sure it’ll be easier if I lose consciousness here.

But… I can't afford that.

I can't.

"No matter how many times… I will stand up again, you scumbag!"

Biohazard? How fitting. I lifted my lips filled with blood and smiled like a real zombie.

Aah, yeah.

This is not a big deal.

This is really not a big deal.

If you compare this to the normal environment that I was raised in… This is not a big deal.

"Hey. Have you ever, at some point in your life, received an elbow drop instead of a 'good morning'?"

"……"

"Or received a vertical-drop-brain-buster[2] from your mother just for putting aside a side dish you hate? Or in kindergarten have your Achilles tendon ripped for some unknown reason while you were playing house with your little sister?"

"……"

"Have you ever fainted with your eyes wide open and foaming at the mouth? When you wake up in the morning, are you ever in the intensive care room of a hospital for some unknown reason? Have you ever had the experience of bumping into your little sister changing her clothes and being forced into cardiac arrest?"

I guess not, I added.

There's no way you could have. I may be the only person in the world that experiences this kind of thing in his everyday life.

Don't look down on me.

I have been beaten—no, I have been trained for over ten years by my mother and my sister.

---

2 A brainbuster is a professional wrestling throw in which a wrestler puts his/her opponent in a front facelock, hooks his/her pants or thigh, and lifts him/her up as if he/she was executing a vertical suplex.

That's why… this much is nothing.

I can't afford to lose.

And besides—If I lose, I can't protect.

Suzutsuki, Kureha, and Konoe…

If I faint here, I won't be able to protect them.

I have to be strong enough to stand up.

"—Well, it's about time to end this game."

The machine-like voice said that.

In his hand was—A knife.

The blade was so sharp that someone would bleed just from touching it.

A silver-colored cutting edge was turned to me.

"I expect that if I cut your muscles out, you will be able to rest. To tell the truth, I didn't want to go this far… But there's no helping it."

“First, the right hand.” Saying that, he stabbed the knife in a straight line.

Aah… Damn.

I don’t have the energy to avoid anymore.

But will this end like this? If it turns out that I can only move my neck, then I will bite you. I don’t have any cavities. My teeth are completely natural.

A dull shine.

The knife approached.

This sharp blade is going to pierce through me—

“I kept you waiting, Jirou.”

A clear alto voice.

The one who stopped the knife with her small palm was smiling calmly.

“Ko, Konoe…”

The one who was standing here was, without a doubt, Konoe Subaru.

Without a doubt, the butler of Suzutsuki Kanade.

“Jirou, from now on, it’s my turn to work. That’s why you can rest.”

ploft A red drop fell onto the ground.

She must have cut herself while holding the blade with her palm.

But even so, Konoe stubbornly kept holding the blade.

“Hyahahaha! Good morning, Butler-kun. You’re late.”

The wolf simply let go of the knife and distanced himself.

“Aah, we don’t need any entrance fees. This is a grudge match. Between you and me. Besides, that is sadly not the only knife that I have with me.”

Exactly as he said.

The wolf took a knife of the same shape from his pocket—And took a stance.

“Nn? Is it okay for you not to tremble? The last time we met here you were trembling and crying, fearing being pierced by the knife. Just like a baby sheep cowering.”

“Aah, yeah… But…”

This time, it’s different.

And.

Konoe threw the knife she was holding onto the ground.

Her clear pupils glared directly at the wolf.

As if she was going to pierce him.

“I am…”

She opened her mouth slowly, as if she were talking to herself.

And her hands… looked like they were trembling.

The trauma from the past.

Fear of blades.

I am sure that she is so scared that she wants to run away. Without a doubt, she is suffering so much that it would be easier if she fainted.

But now, she is desperately fighting with that.

Only for the sake of protecting someone important to her—

“I am—A butler.”

Saying that, she tightly clenched her trembling fingers.

“That’s why… I don’t fear that knife.”

She took a posture as she resolved herself.

A sheep.

This posture truly looks like a sheep.

A little sheep being attacked by a hungry wolf.

Trying to avoid the merciless fangs while trembling so much.

Normally, the sheep will be eaten and it ends.

A pathetic little sheep is killed without even the chance to raise a scream.

The law of the jungle.

The weak are killed by the strong.

This is what they call the rule of this world.

But—

But if only once, I think it's okay for a sheep to kill a wolf.

An upset. A junior dominating a senior. A cornered rat attacking a cat.

Whichever word is fine.

It should be fine to sometimes have a sheep that shows her fangs to the wolf.

It should be fine to have a sheep that claws on the wolf's throat.

It should be fine to have a sheep that shatters the fangs of the wolf.

This foolish fantasy doesn't seem so bad.

That's why…

"Sorry, Subaru-sama."

I somehow managed to retain my consciousness that was about to fade and uttered a voice.

"I will leave the rest to you."

She only said, "Leave it to me," in response to my entrusting words.

This was– the sign for the start of the battle.

Running like a bullet, the wolf held the knife and thrust it in Konoe's direction.

A dash.

Certainly, it was a dash with the intent of killing with that blade.

The knife shone.

A sharp knife, like a fang.

But Konoe didn’t even move to dodge.

No… It wasn’t that…

“!?”

I caught my breath in surprise.

Konoe leapt over the knife that was thrust in her direction.

A body danced near the ceiling.

And surprisingly, like that she used the knife as a platform and stepped on it.

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

A roar.

The body of Konoe's that used the knife as a platform and jumped high was… spinning.

A lively rotation that seemed to be showing her back on purpose.

An acceleration for the sake of raising the power of the kick.

Yes, a kick.

I know that technique.

Once, my mom used that on me; I fainted in a single blow.

Rolling savate.

Her right leg stretched in a beautiful arch.

That one blow, which seemed to gouge the air, went through the mask of the wolf…!

"…!"

The wolf speechlessly fell onto the ground from the force of the kick, and there was no sign of the body rising again. It looks like he lost consciousness in one blow.

That was perfect.

A rolling savate as a counter.

Hey, hey… What a girl.

To decide the battle in only one attack.

In only one attack—she tore out the throat of the wolf.

"……"

Aaah… Damn!

She is so cool.

This is so regrettable, but now I know the how the girls who keep screaming, "He is so calm and cool!" feel.

Subaru-sama… huh?

Surely, Konoe is so cool now that I could fall for her.

"Konoe, the two of them are behind this door…"

The moment I said that, Konoe started running.

I turned to the direction of the door while pushing my own body.

On the other side of the door.

There was a room the size of four tatami mats.[3]

I saw the figure of two people sleeping on the floor while wearing cuffs.

“Kureha!”

I ran towards my little sister who was falling asleep to the side. …I’m relieved. She isn’t hurt. Looks like they are only under the effects of some sleep medication.

“Subaru, Jirou-kun…”

Suzutsuki opened her eyes and released a void voice.

“Ojou-sama…”

[3] Japanese measurement for rooms.

The butler was holding her master's body tightly. Tears were flowing from those clear eyes.

"I have no excuses. Because… Because I was not paying attention, I put you and Kureha-chan in danger. I am… a failure as a butler."

She said that with all her might in a rough voice.

Suzutsuki only gently smiled in response.

"Hmm. That is not true. Didn't you protect me perfectly? As a master, I can't fire such a good butler."

A fresh tone.

With that as a trigger, Konoe started to cry.

And then she called with a gloomy voice.

The name of her own master.

"…Kana-chan."

"What, Subaru?"

“Is it okay… Is it okay for me, for such a useless butler, to be at your side?”

“Hm—Let’s see.”

Suzutsuki ordered her butler while smiling.

“From now on, always stay by my side, as a butler and… as a friend as well. Serve me at my side for our whole lives. This is an order, Subaru.”

“…Yes. Understood, Ojou-sama.”

Master and Butler.

Konoe and Suzutsuki stared at each other as if to confirm their relationship

Aaah—Case settled, for the time being.

Or rather… I wonder if it is okay for me to sleep. This is pathetic, but I am already at my limit. I wonder if it’s because I am relieved, but my consciousness is…

And.

Suddenly.

From behind *pachi pachi* a dry sound echoed.

When I turned around, there was the wolf.

The kidnapper who was supposed to be defeated by Konoe was clapping.

“You… Intend to continue…!?”

Konoe once again put up her fists.

But—The wolf did not respond to that.

And I also can’t hear that frivolous voice that was resounding some time ago.

The kidnapper just—Calmly took off the mask.

The face was uncovered.

A fearless face and sharp eyes. A long figure with a matching black suit and a calm expression… He should be in his late twenties.

After fixing his hair that had been tousled by the mask, he calmly put on his silver-rimmed glasses.

“Wha—”

After looking at the face of the guy, Konoe gasped.

…Eh?

What’s up with this reaction? Instead of meeting a kidnapper, it was more like she met an acquaintance in the middle of the city…

“This is not possible… Why…?”

Konoe moved her mouth while her eyes were black-and-white from the surprise.

The man raised his glasses a bit as if he was going to check the time.

“Subaruuuuu!”

The man raised a voice that didn’t suit his figure and hugged Konoe tightly.

He really hugged her.

……

…Hey.

What's with this development? Who is he? Why is he hugging Konoe? This wasn't some perfectly pitched baseball game celebration.

"Aah, he is Subaru's father."

Might—

Suzutsuki calmly said that.

……

…What?

Didn't this Ojou-sama just say something outrageous as if it was nothing?

"Konoe Nagare. He might look really young, but this is Subaru's father."

"……"

"By the way, he is the butler of the actual head of the Suzutsuki family—In other words, my father's butler."

“……”

“So? Are you surprised?”

“No… Rather than surprised…”

Confirming the situation.

In front of my eyes was Suzutsuki grinning like she had just pulled a prank, the dumbfounded Konoe with the man who they say is her father hugging her, and Kureha, who was sleeping deeply.

Err—and… What is this?

I don’t want to believe this but…

Looks like we were caught up in some scheme.

At the moment I felt a bad sensation about the reality unfolding before my eyes, I finally reached my limit and my consciousness fell into a deep blackness.

Chapter 6 – The Wandering Butler and Myself the Chicken

Part 1

A white light.

Hanging from the ceiling was a chandelier that I had never seen before.

With a blurred line of sight, I opened my eyes.

"…It hurts."

A pain that seemed to be splitting me wracked my body. My body was wrapped in carefully applied bandages. I don't know who did it, but it seems that I received careful treatment and was changed out of my swimsuit.

Well, I am really grateful, but what the hell is this?

I put on my glasses that were lying on the bedside (fortunately, it seems like they were fixed). I lifted my upper body and looked around to check the situation. Expensive furniture and a refined carpet. A splendid room that looked straight out of the castles that appear in fairy tales. And I was sleeping in the enormous, soft, and fluffy bed in the center.

"Sup, already awake?"

A rough voice sounded from the corner of the room.

A man with neatly combed hair and silver-rimmed glasses stood there.

Konoe Nagare.

The man who was said to be Konoe's father was glaring at me like he was staring at his prey.

"How is it? Does your body hurt? You love comedy bastard."

"Love comedy… you say. What do you mean?"

"Aah? You touched my daughter's breasts in an empty science room and had a nosebleed. Such a lucky bastard only exists in the love comedy world."

The sound of footsteps was raised and Konoe Nagare spat that out as he walked.

On closer inspection, he looks too young. If he is Konoe's father, then even if he is young he should be in his late thirties, but no matter how you look he can only be in his twenties. Don't tell me that he had plastic surgery?

"Be grateful to Kanade Ojou-sama. If it wasn't for her, you would be on the garbage pile. And your injuries weren't severe. You also didn't break any bones, and the treatment was excellent."

"Excellent, you say… Weren't you the one that beat me up?"

He beat me up to his heart's content. Even an inappropriate remark from a politician wouldn't hurt so much.

"There was no helping it. I had intended to make you faint in the first blow. You are at fault since you didn't lose consciousness right away, and I did hold back."

"Liar! You were hitting me seriously!"

"Don't be a fool. I somehow restrained my will to tear you to pieces. I was controlling myself so I didn't kill you!"

Aah, I will probably never get along with him.

I immediately thought that. I think that should have nailed it.

Standing at the bedside, Konoe Nagare was looking down at me. A black vest and tight pants, and a loosely tied necktie; this should be a butler uniform. Looks alone, this suited him so much that it's frustrating.

If he is wearing these clothes, then that should mean this is Suzutsuki's house. As I predicted, it's an expensive mansion befitting of rich people.

"…And Kureha?"

“Calm down. She is sleeping in the next room. The scenario was planned so that she wouldn’t get hurt.”

“……”

Scenario, huh.

As I thought, the situation that happened in that leisure land was all Suzutsuki’s plan.

Faked kidnapping.

And the reason for going to the extent of such a troublesome thing was…

“Hey, can I ask a question?”

“What? I will listen to anything besides [Can I call you father-in-law?]”

“…I won’t ask that. What kind of human do you think I am?”

“A pest that tries to haunt my beloved daughter. If I had a pesticide that worked on you, I would spray it all over the world.”

Oyabaka.[1] Looks like this old man hates me from the depths of his soul. Well, I don't care anyway. I also hate him. There's no way I would like such a hostility-filled adult.

"Old man. Even if I happened to marry Konoe one day, I would never call you father-in-law. 'Old man' is enough for you."

"Don't talk like you are superior, you shitty brat! If you called me father-in-law, I would die from allergies. And even if the world would come to an end, I would never hand my cute Subaru to you!"

Konoe Nagare… No, the old man raised his middle finger at me. And in response, I turned my thumbs down and made a [Fuu] sound to provoke him.

"I'll tell you straight up, I hate you."

"Don't worry, I also hate you."

"Huh. You said that, you damn brat!"

"Huh. I will say it however many times you want, Oyabaka!"

[1] Overly fond parent

We clashed our lines of sight and they started to release fireworks. I was going to ask about the leisure land, but I suddenly didn't give a shit anymore. If you want something, just hurry up and do it. The one that makes the first move wins. I have to decide this in one blow…

"Looks like you are both getting along well. Won't you let me join?"

When I was seeing myself in a dangerous situation, a voice that I was used to hearing came from the open door.

It's Suzutuski. She was wearing the same clothes as in the morning.

"Nagare. You can go back."

"Understood, Kanade Ojou-sama."

He bowed his head exaggeratedly, and left through the door. As expected from a butler. It's only correct to act politely in front of your master.

"He is not a bad guy, but when it comes to Subaru, he overreacts a bit."

"A bit, you say… No matter how you look at him, he is an Oyabaka. If he continues like that, no one will ever propose to Konoe."

Before, he raised an eccentric voice and hugged her. The reason Konoe said that she doesn't have a good relationship with her father is probably because he is always clinging to her. If he acts like that, he will be seen as a creepy father.

"But Nagare really does look like Jirou-kun."

"…Geh."

What is this girl saying? That old man and I look alike? Aside from having glasses, I don't think we have anything in common.

"You really are similar. Like how you both really care about your family. Well, for Nagare it is not too hard to be so overly protective about Subaru because she is his only family."

"Only?"

Now that she mentions it, Konoe's mother…

"Konoe's mother died when that girl was five years old. Well, she had a weak body in the first place, and giving birth to Subaru was the trigger…"

"……."

So this was the reason for Konoe saying that she didn't have any siblings. Since her mother was in such a condition, she wasn't able to give birth to

other children after Konoe. Even though they probably wanted a boy to be the heir.

“Now that I think about it, the time that Subaru pleaded so much to become my butler was around then. The people of my household told Nagare to marry once again, but Konoe rejected that idea while crying. [I don’t need a new mother!], she said. I am sure that she was afraid that the existence of her mother would be erased.”

–I need to be Ojou-sama’s butler no matter what.

I am pretty sure Konoe said that the first day we met, in the infirmary.

……

It seems like it’s just as Suzutsuki says. She wants to be a butler to protect the existence of her own mother. That’s why she was so desperate to be Suzutsuki’s butler…

“But—The reality was not so sweet.”

She said those bitter words.

“Because of the kidnapping at the leisure land, Konoe developed a blade-phobia. Since then, there have been two feelings clashing inside of her. The ‘I want to stay as a butler’ feeling and the ‘Is it okay for me to stay as a butler’ feeling.”

The feeling that she had to be a butler in order to protect her dead mother's existence and the feeling of helplessness from being unable to protect her master with her blade-phobia.

This is the so-called 'dilemma'.

To think that she was struggling with these two feelings…

"We also tried many ways to cure her blade-phobia, but we weren't able to do that. To be honest, I've lost count of the number of times I've thought about telling Subaru to stop being a butler."

"But now I think that not saying that was for the better."

Suzutsuki said that while looking at me.

"When you met Subaru, I thought that I would never get such a big chance again. I thought that by keeping in contact with you, who has the same kind of problem, Subaru's phobia could somehow be cured.

"That's why you told Konoe to help with my treatment…"

"Exactly. But as I thought, it didn't go so smoothly. I thought that she might change a bit after helping with your treatment, but Subura was still as scared by blades as ever. Then I thought about changing the approach a bit."

“That’s today’s kidnapping?”

“Hiahaha! Exactly, Jirou-kun!” Once again, the voice of the wolf was heard. Looking closely, I saw that Suzutsuki was talking with a little machine close to her mouth.

…Aah, that irritating voice was this girl’s doing. I bet she put a speaker and a radio inside that mask, and surely she was checking our movements through the security cameras and talking. To make sure that Konoe wouldn’t discover that the old man was behind that wolf, Suzutsuki went through the trouble of becoming the voice.

“Sure enough, the plan went well. Subaru was able to overcome her own phobia in order to rescue her friends that had fallen in danger. Well, it’s not like she is completely cured, but for now it’s already a big step.”

“And as a bonus, you were able to develop a better relationship with Konoe.”

Geez, what a tactician this girl is. She used me and Kureha as she liked to help in the treatment of Konoe’s phobia.

“Well. I am truly… thankful to the both of you. Because Subaru was able to continue being my butler.”

“Thank you,” Suzutsuki said politely.

Damn…

Will we always be dancing in the palms of her hands? I somehow feel irritated. If she had asked, I would have gladly helped!

“You shouldn’t talk too much about Konoe’s father. When it comes to her, you also become unaware of your surroundings.”

I just threw that out with the intention of provoking her.

But—for some reason, she started laughing…

“I see, that’s true. Because I truly love Subaru.”

“Hah?”

Love her?

What’s up with such profound words?

If you say it like that, it sounds like you see Konoe as a love partner…

“That’s true. My first love was Subaru.”

“……”

……

Wait.

What is she saying?

No matter what, I won't be fooled. She seems to be wearing a serious facial expression, but this has to be another facade. Yeah, there's no way that this wolf girl would have such a…

"Oh. Since you are already here, how about having dinner here? Once the preparations are done I will come by to call you."

Saying that, Suzutsuki walked towards the door without even hearing what I had to say. And right when she was about to open the door, she turned around.

"Jirou-kun. We will be helping with your phobia's treatment from now on as well. Otherwise, it wouldn't be fair. Because of you, Subaru can stay as my butler. And more importantly…"

"Thank you for being friends with my butler."

Suzutsuki left the room, smiling.

…That's against the rules.

This means a red card.

My heart is beating so fast that it feels like it was shot.

She was incredibly cute. How can she make such a carefree expression? Uwaa! What I do? I feel like something important will be pulled out from inside me.

And.

While I was agitated from the shock, the door was softly knocked.

“I am entering, Jirou.”

A crystal clear, alto voice.

It was Konoe.

Wearing a butler uniform- in other words, the same clothing as the old man. This really suits her. As I thought, this absolutely suits her more than that old man… Heh? Somehow… It seems like she has some red stains here and there. I wonder why.

A red stain was stark against her white shirt, as if she had showered in blood when she got back.

“Aah, this? This is nothing big. I just fought with my father back there.”

"…Heh?"

"I also said, 'I hate you so much, father!' to his face."

"……"

Errr…

I wonder if she is repaying him for the hits he gave me. This certainly makes me happy, and my heart skips a beat, but even so… I wonder if it's okay for that old man. I hope he won't hang himself if she says something like that to him.

"But more importantly, Jirou, does your body hurt?"

"Aah, only a bit, but I am already used to it. I am sure that it'll heal quickly."

Since long ago, I have been quick at recovering from injuries. A gift from my family.

I wonder if Konoe came to see how I was doing because she was worried about me. Aah, problems aside, in the end this girl is always a good girl.

"I see. That's good. If you weren't able to move because of your wounds, you wouldn't be able to fulfill your promise."

“Promise?”

“Aah. That ‘I will listen to anything that you have to say later’. You definitely said that to me, right?”

Konoe had a bright smile on her face.

……

This is dangerous, what is it supposed to be?

A horrifying feeling ran down my back. Well, I did say that, but… but that was in the heat of the moment. You don’t have to take it so seriously…!

“Ahaha. You don’t have to take it so seriously, Konoe. That was like a lighthearted promise and…”

“[Konoe]? What are you saying, Jirou?”

She said that while smiling from ear to ear.

“It’s not [Konoe] but [Ojou-sama], right? Now, Jirou is absolutely obedient to me. If you don’t get that, it’ll be bad.”

“……”

You're kidding, right? Konoe-san?

I wanted to say this, but there was no mood for that.

This is dangerous. This girl's eyes are serious. Kuuh, is this really happening? To think that such a lighthearted words would raise such a death flag…!

"U-understood, Ojou-sama."

Compelled by fear, I did as I was told.

"Yeah, it's okay like that. Now, Jirou-kun is absolutely obedient to me?"

"…Yes. Just as you said, Ojou-sama."

"That means that you are prepared to endure a little pain?"

Hii! She said such an outrageous thing with such a face! And what did she mean by 'a little pain'? Don't tell me she still holds a grudge against me because I hit her at the pool!?

"Which is it? Are you? Aren't you?"

"I am! I can endure a bit of pain!"

I nodded awkwardly. Because, I didn't have any way to say 'NO' in such a situation. Yes yes yes. Aah, dear God. Please save this pathetic me. At least tell this girl to stop with the torture.

"Then, I am starting. Don't move."

"Ye-yeah!"

Uwaa! This is bad. She's going to hit me! Thinking that, I steeled my body.

Suddenly, my body experienced an unexpected sensation.

A light sensation on my skin. The smell of flowers floating gently in the air. When I opened my eyelids that I had previously closed, there was Konoe Subaru.

Konoe was hugging my body.

"Ko-Konoe!?"

Without thinking, I addressed her normally. There was nowhere to retort.

This was somehow a more shocking scene than if I had been beaten by her.

Konoe was—pressing her face into my chest and sobbing.

“…Dummy.”

Konoe softly said that in a trembling voice.

“I was- I was so scared…. I was so, so scared…”

“……”

Scared.

This is not even worth saying, but it was probably of the blades.

…Of course. Blades are her biggest trauma. No matter how much you say that it was to protect Suzutsuki, she had to face her trauma directly. She must be trembling with fear now.

“Don’t cry, Konoe.”

I ended up using gentle words.

“Didn’t you protect Suzutsuki this time? You are not a failure anymore. If you put time and effort into it, you can even get rid of your fear of blades.”

At that moment.

Konoe suddenly looked up.

Those tear-filled eyes were gazing intently at me with an angry expression.

“Wrong…”

“…eh?”

She suddenly threw that out and I became completely lost. Wrong? What is wrong? Wasn’t she afraid of blades?

“Wrong, wrong wrong wrong! I wasn’t afraid of that! That moment… what I was afraid of at that moment was…!”

…That Jirou would disappear right in front of me.

She said that, completely beaten and teary-eyed.

“That moment… Do you know how I felt when I woke up at that poolside? Do you know how I felt when I realized that you went to save Ojou-sama and Kureha-chan by yourself?”

“……”

“I was scared. I was so scared. I thought that you could disappear from my sight just like that. I thought that we would never meet again. If… if you were stabbed by that knife while I was sleeping…!”

“……”

“When I thought that… I was scared… I was so scared! Ji… Jirou could… My first friend at the academy could… When I thought that you could die, I was so scared…!”

“…Konoe.”

I silently hugged her trembling back.

I wouldn’t be able to stand that situation if I didn’t do that.

“Sorry, my bad.”

“…Fo, fool. Even if you apologize… I will never forgive you…!”

Her light hair shook.

Although she acted tough on the outside, everything about her was frail on the inside.

There was no trace of that Subaru-sama that fought with the wolf—Of that always cold and cool Subaru-sama that calmly fought with her own phobia.

Standing there was only a girl.

So small, so slim. The image of a girl that, if hugged too tightly, would break apart.

“Moron, moron moron moron…”

With her throat crying from the dryness.

…I want to protect.

For some reason, I thought that.

I thought that I should protect Konoe… That I should protect her.

So weak. The me with this appearance, covered in bandages. The me who was beaten so easily at that time. I am so weak…

“……”

That’s why… I should become stronger.

Strong enough that that they won't have to worry about me anymore… I will become so strong that this girl will never cry again. I will become a man strong enough to the point that even if any kind of danger comes, I will stand by her side and protect her…

"….Ah."

I see.

I finally get it now.

The meaning of your last words.

Fique sempre ao meu lado.

Stand by me.[2]

That is… to become a man that could say those words to someone important to you.

Become strong enough to be able to protect the people important to you.

So strong that you can stick out your chest and say, I will protect you, so always be by my side…

“Jirou…”

She calmly raised her head.

Her face was covered in tears.

Her eyes were slightly blurred.

Our lips were close enough to touch each other.

[2] The text is flipped here, and I wrote the upper sentence in Portuguese to give meaning to the sentence. If I left it in English… it would be messed up. In the Japanese text, the upper sentence was in English, while the second sentence was Jirou translating it into Japanese.

That moment, I held my breath to her lovely outline.

…The moment I held.

“Fuoo!?”

Suddenly my vision turned red.

Nosebleed.

The red torrent that I had managed to hold back until now finally burst.

“Are… are you okay, Jirou? That’s why I asked you if you could resist this pain.”

Konoe released my body and went to grab a tissue.

…No.

Don’t tell me that I am such a pathetic chicken bastard that I broke up the mood like that. To tell the truth, I had been enduring it since the moment I hugged you.

But this was my limit.

But… you know. A~ah, from now on, I will never mistake her for a guy again.

And.

It was when I was holding back the nosebleed that was coming.

The door opened abruptly without even being knocked.

While I was thinking what could be happening, I saw standing there a girl who looked good in a short skirt.

It was Kureha.

“A, are you okay, Konoe-senpai!?”

Kureha ignored me and got closer to Konoe as fast as she could. What is up with this cold-hearted little sister? No matter how you look at it, I am the one who has heavier wounds, and I am even having a nosebleed…

“I heard from Onee-sama that, ‘Right now, Jirou-kun might be raping Subaru.’ Aah, Konoe-senpai. With his red and inflamed eyes, you were probably scared… Then let’s have a meeting for the victims right now!”

That devil Suzutsuki. She told another lie. And besides, a meeting for the victims? If you want to put it that way, I look more like the victim here!

“And Nii-san is a bad Nii-san! Even though you are dating Nee-sama, to think that you were going to tempt Konoe-senpai while I was out anemic…!”

“…Anemic?”

Aah, I get it, it’s probably Suzutsuki’s doing. Looks like she did a good job of hiding the truth from Kureha in order to not let her know what happened today.

“Calm down, my little sister. You are being deceived by that woman.”

“So, so cruel! To be unable to be faithful to his own lover, Nii-sama is done for as a human being.”

Hey, hey. What are you saying to your brother? But this situation is really bad. If Kureha had a pipe chair right now, she would come rushing to beat me with it. If I don’t do something really fast…

“Say, Jirou…”

Unexpectedly.

The butler that had been silent opened her mouth.

“What do you mean when you say that you are going out with Ojou-sama?”

"…Geh."

Uwa, I forgot that she wasn't supposed to know that Suzutsuki and I were pretending to be lovers.

……

This is bad.

I don't know why, but I have a really bad premonition.

"Hee… So that's how it is. Jirou and Ojou-sama were in such a relationship…"

An extremely enraged voice pierced the room.

The mood froze.

Even though we were inside a room, I felt a cold wind blowing.

"I must kill. To lay a hand on Kana-chan… I will pierce a stake through the chest of such a pervert and kill him in order to not let him be reborn again."

Konoe had her head down and a cold smile on her face.

……

I will be killed.

If this continues, I will really be killed.

The moment I judged the situation to be like that, I moved my wounded body as fast as I could and vacated the bed.

“Aaah! Nii-san is running away!”

Of course! This mansion is already like a cursed palace for me! For every additional moment that I take to flee, the more my life is in danger.

“Daaaaaaaa!”

With a vigorous shout, I forcibly opened the window of the mansion and jumped from it. The orange-colored sun entered my vision. It was sunset. The setting sun that burned calmly was shining for me who was flying from the second floor.

“Uoooooo!?”

Ahead of me was a two meter long sky dive.

I took a defensive posture in preparation for the unexpected height and managed to land somehow. The trimmed lawn made a good cushion.

What was there was a garden that looked more like a sports park.

Right, first I have to leave this huge site. I'll think about this afterwards.

"Ara. You certainly are in high spirits."

At the moment that I tried to start running, I heard a voice that I didn't want to hear. When I forcefully turned to my side, there was the culprit that had made the situation like this.

"I thought that it was about time for you to come jumping from the window, but I never expected that it would go so smoothly."

The devil was laughing amusedly. This is a crime for pleasure…! How much will she toy me until she is satisfied?

"Suzutsuki! You… screwed me over again!"

"Don't say such things that can be easily misunderstood. Even though I only did it with the best of intentions."

"Thanks to that, my life is about to disappear!"

Yes, without a doubt the cause of all of my misfortune is this Ojou-sama. The situation is like this because this girl kept making explosive remarks like a B-29 [3]. If this keeps up, my spirit will be crushed to ashes.

“Anyway, you’re coming with me!”

“Eh?”

I started running hastily while pulling Suzutsuki’s arm. Of course, when I say arm, I mean that I was grabbing above her sleeve. If I held directly onto her hand, I would collapse from blood loss.

“What do you plan on doing to me? Don’t tell me that you plan to elope with me just like this?”

“I don’t! You are a hostage! Because if I just run away like this I will be killed by them!”

This is what they call ‘using leverage’. I feel like the villain of a late-night drama broadcasted overseas, but I have to pray that this will not develop into a car chase.

“Well, leaving that aside, Jirou-kun.”

[3] I think it’s related to this http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boeing_B-29_Superfortress

“What?”

“Errr… Please, stop pulling so forcefully. It feels a bit embarrassing when a man does that to me.”

“Why is the person who keeps toying with the bodies of other people getting embarrassed by this kind of thing?”

We ran onto the green lawn while I screamed.

Suddenly, I felt a heavy pressure from behind. When I turned back without thinking, there were the heads of my little sister and classmate who had turned into two hunting dogs.

Kureha and Subaru.

The ones that were chasing us with the expressions of two demons were abruptly trying to scream something.

“Heeey! Stop there, Nii-san! If you stop now I will forgive you with only one blow of Shungokusatsu![4]”

“Isn’t that the same as telling me to die!?

[4] Or “Instant Hell Murder.” The trademark special attack of Akuma from Capcom’s Street Fighter series.

“Jirou! Don’t think you can run away! I will use the butler memory-erasing technique on you once again!”

“I have the feeling that instead of forgetting I will remember the memories of my previous lives, so please give me a rest!”

I rapidly dashed while continuing to scream ‘hiii’.

The moment I am caught, it’ll be a dead end. This situation is the same as being chased by a shinigami. Death is— my death is unmistakably imminent….!

“Ahaha!”

Suzutsuki was laughing like a little kid while being dragged by me.

“Aaaah, I knew that I wouldn’t be bored if I was with you. I hope that I can feel this amused every day from now on!”

“Shut up, you wolf girl! This situation is all your fault, because you keep spewing bullshit…!”

“Ara, but I only told the truth! For example—when I said that my first love was Subaru.”

“Wha–…”

When I turned around, surprised, she was smiling with her tongue sticking out. My cheeks turned red from gloom.

……

I can't stand it anymore.

The butler, the Ojou-sama and the little sister.

When I think that I will have to endure two more years of this messed up academic life, I start to cry, even though I never thought that I would live such a life until these last few days. I wonder if we can cure my gynophobia like this…

"Shit. This is probably what they call a shitty daily life."

But…

If I had to say only one thing, it would be that this noisy daily life doesn't seem to be ending soon. And as Suzutsuki says, it looks like 'bored' is the only thing that I won't be.

"Yosh!"

Maybe I should be a little more serious.

The sunset reflected in my eyes.

The setting sun in the madder red sky illuminated us.

Inside of this orange shine—I screamed with all my might.

–As I thought! Girls are terrifying!

Afterword

I am Asano Hajime, pleased to meet you.

The title of this light novel, “Mayo Chiki!”, is the abbreviation of “Mayoeru Shitsuji to Chikin na Ore to”[1].

Of course, it doesn’t have anything to do with mayonnaise chicken or anything like this kind of junk food, but “Mayo Chiki!” is something that would sell well in a convenience store.

Anyways. Talking about “Mayo Chiki!”, like the name says, it’s a story about a butler heroine and a chicken bastard protagonist.

The heroine isn’t just a butler, but a cross-dressing butler. And the protagonist also isn’t just a chicken bastard, but a chicken bastard that ends up XXXX whenever a girl touches him. And an Ojou-sama and a little sister show up, and it ends up in a completely messed up, academy life love comedy.

Yes, love comedy.

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[1] Literally, “The Wandering Butler and Myself the Chicken.”

Changing the subject a bit, “Mayo Chiki!” is a love comedy written in a slightly special environment.

Yes, this book is a love comedy written at a driving school.

I wonder… I wonder if there’re no precedents of love comedies being written at driving schools.

You see, I didn’t write at such a place because I wanted to do so.

And if you ask me why I wrote at a school… I was running out of time. My application deadline was…

I remember that when I sent my application to the 5th MF Bunko[2] new writer contest, the time to send it in was almost up.

And my driving school graduation period was imminent…

And at the driving school I attended, there was a scary rule that if you didn’t graduate in the due period, you lost all the money you paid for the course, but I didn’t rush to that bad end like a salmon going upstream his birth river.

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2 A popular light novel publishing company in Japan.

That's why at the time, my daily life was to wake up early, go to the driving school, think about the story on the bus, write down my ideas on my college notes during my free time, then copy them to my computer when I got home.

Did meeting the application deadline come first? Or did graduating from driving school come first? It felt like a chicken race. And like that, I could meet the deadline safely and managed to graduate from the driving school.

And yet, fortunately, the product that I made that time was able to become a book like this, so I guess I am one of the rarely seen super-lucky-bastards. I was so lucky that I am scared of my future[3].

Then, a bit late, I will give my thanks.

First, the one responsible for me, Shouji-sama. I really only caused him trouble. I was able to understand and embed in my body that a book couldn't be completed by only one person. I will be in your care from now on, as well.

And a big thanks to Kikuchi Seiji-sama who, even with a busy schedule, was able to draw such clean and pretty illustrations. I think that the most fortunate thing was having Kikuchi Seiji-sama designing my characters. I am sincerely grateful.

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3 By this, he means that he may have used up all of the luck he will ever have and will probably have an unlucky future from now on.

Also, the editor-in-chief Misaka-sama, the senpais of the contest selection who chose my work, the people of the editor section, and everyone that worked in the publication and the selling of the book. I have to thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

And also my instructor from driving school. I am really sorry for being such a frivolous student. To the people from the circle who lent me such valuable stories- next time, let's go drink some sake together.

And lastly, a deep thanks that I can't really express to you, the reader, for getting this book in your hands.

Then, for the sake of being able to have another meeting with you all, I think I will step on the accelerator and move straight ahead. I am really pleased to have met you.

Asano Hajime

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